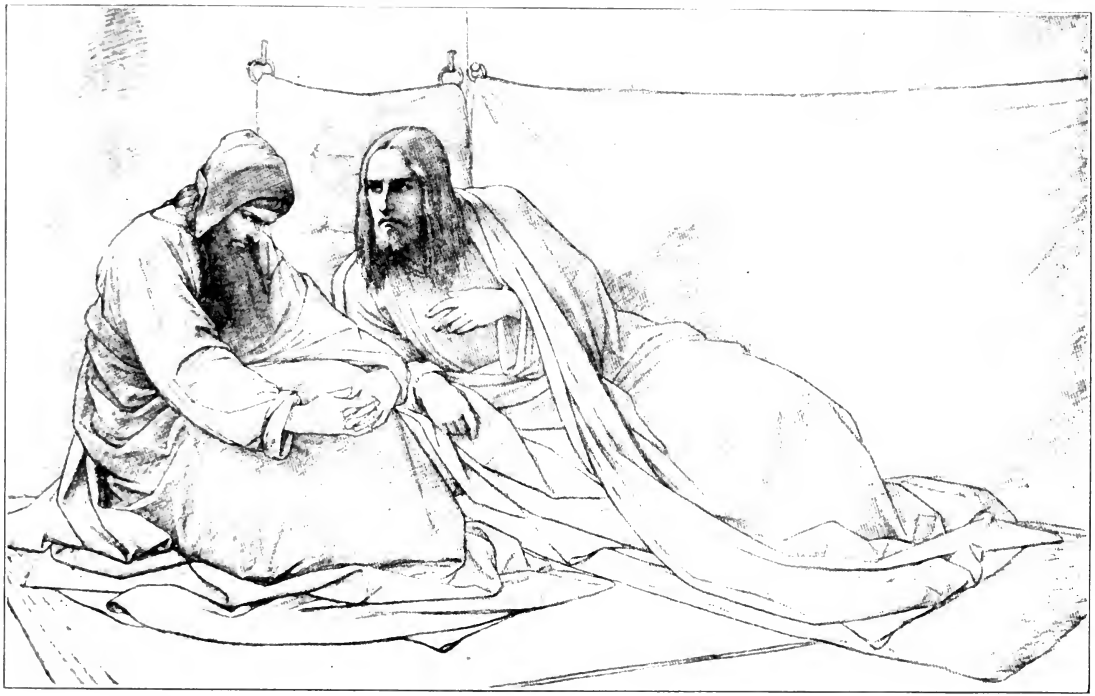
NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3 3433 07994785 3

Twilight Talks TO Tired Hearts

W. W. WHALEN

Whaten

COPYRIGHT 1914
BY THE REV. W. W. WHALEN, HARRISBURG, PA.



CHRIST AND NICODEMUS *Drawing by E. v. Steinle*

Twilight Talks

TO

TIRED HEARTS

BY

W. W. WHALEN

Author of "Ill-Starred Babbie," "The Lily of the Coal Fields."

1914

MISSION PRESS OF THE SOCIETY OF THE DIVINE WORD

TECHNY, ILLINOIS

NIHIL OBSTAT

H. AUBRY, S. V. D.
Lib. Cens.

Techny, Ill., Jan. 1st 1914

* * *

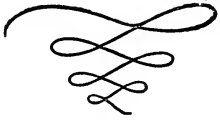
IMPRIMATUR

J. E. QUIGLEY
Archiepiscopus Chicagiensis

To the Memory of Father Faber,

"That Friend of the Tired

Heart in Search of God."



NOT VERIFIED
BY
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

CONTENTS

TWILIGHT TALKS TO TIRED HEARTS

1. The Dead and the Living Year

THE old year is dead. The wild bells of last midnight rang out to the wild sky and the flying cloud and the frosty light the news that the year was dying (*In Memoriam*)—dying, every moment bringing him nearer to the end; dying, taking away with him locked in his cold heart the joys and sorrows of millions of people who had smiled and laughed, sobbed and wept, during the reign of that dying old year.

Now the old year has passed away, and is hidden with God, and the New Year is with us. The New Year! ah! the stir that gives our hearts! It takes us back to other New Year days, back to golden-tinted hours when we tasted life's sweetest joys. Back on the wings of memory we are borne, and again we stand over the white-faced form of a loved one dead. We see again that never-to-be-forgotten smile of peace on the still lips. We see that "strange transformation from age to youth, when the wrinkles vanish, and the features come out from the hollows of care and years"—that wonderful change which so often steals over the face of the dead, as if at the last the weary heart renewed its youth.

New Year's day! "Ah! it wakes old years and old tears as well, for it seems to wake those

who have long been dead. Childish memories.... flowers that have borne fruits.... But the dead do not come back. There were figures in the picture once which are missing now. The years rob us as they pass. One by one, men and things are missing." (Faber, *Foot of the Cross.*) God alone remains unchanged, unchangeable, ever the same. Years come and years go; old years died in giving new years birth; but God suffers no vicissitude. "Thou in the beginning, O Lord, didst found the earth," quotes Saint Paul from the Psalms, "and the works of Thy hands are the heavens. They shall perish, but Thou shalt continue; and they shall all grow old as a garment. And as a vesture Thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the self-same and Thy years shall not fail."

With the New Year, we have begun anew in our spiritual lives. Let the dead past bury its dead. We have bidden a curt farewell to the failings and sins and vices of the past. We will not so much as look back on our yesterdays. They are decaying corpses which the New Year has buried deep and low, and hidden utterly from sight. We will not become ghouls, and unearth those foul bones, the skeletons of our former bad habits. The New Year bells have rung out the darkness of our lives, and rung in the Christ that is to be with us all our remaining days, unless we extinguish the light of grace, and ourselves bring back the darkness and shadow of death, the gloom of mortal sin. We have put our hand

to the plow in good earnest. There must be no returning now to the sins of the past—no going back into the mud.

We have made bright beginnings at Bethlehem. We started our New Year at the lowly Manger-Crib. There we made vows for the future. The head of our year is the Christ-Child, and we will not permit the body of the year which has only begun, to be unworthy of its Divine Head. We went back to the Founder of our Catholic religion, and discovered nothing to blush for in Him.

Let the adherents of the sects do likewise; go back, and study the lives of their founders—Luther, Henry VIII., and other such glories of the human race—and then let them truthfully tell us how they feel about the cornerstone of their churches. But our Founder was not like their founders. The Babe of Bethlehem, who grew into the Boy of Nazareth, and became the sneered-at Prophet of Galilee, was divine. Those other founders were human. The house of our faith is built on a rock; the heretics have constructed their shallow edifices on the shifting sands.

"Out of Galilee a prophet riseth not," objected the Pharisees, who read the ancient prophecies with a veil over their hearts, and whose eyes were holden that they might not see when they conned the infallible scriptures. They were too haughty to acknowledge as the promised Messiah the Wonder-Worker whose very speech be-

trayed that He was a Galilean, though never man spoke as He spoke.

But we are in no doubt, as some of the Jews were. We know that the humble Nazarene was God walking on His own earth; God passing over His own brook Cedron; God fasting in His own awful desert, where the wild beasts howled and fought. And knowing our God, the Founder first of our world, and then the Founder of our Christian Catholic religion, we have no reason to blush for Him, no reason to be ashamed on His account.

But has He no reason to be ashamed of us? Can we come before Him with unblushing cheeks? Have we no failures and backslidings with which to reproach ourselves? No promises made to God and broken ruthlessly? No grace-giving sacraments neglected, no prayers left unsaid? Aye, question of questions, have we committed no mortal sins?

We have no cause to blush at our Savior's poverty, for it was of His own choosing. He could have been a king, and overthrown Herod's power, if He said the word. But we must blush for the poverty we find in our own spiritual lives —the thread-bare warp and woof of our resolutions, the broken and discolored fragments that we call prayers, the wind-beaten and distracted graces which have tried to plant their seed in our souls.

Oh, what have we to offer our God? We stand before Him in the searchlight of the New Year which beats down upon us, and we feel our needs,

the abject poverty of our souls, and we blush and are constrained, and lament our past years. And that blush of the sinner is more beautiful in God's eyes than the warm pink glow on the young apple-blossom; that tear of repentance which flows down the sinner's cheek is a pearl of great price, so valuable, indeed, that God gives heaven away for it—that tear so lovely, so far lovelier than the dewdrop on the wild forest rose, that God sends His angel to record that tear in the book of eternal life.

The old year is dead. Yesterday is gone forever. To-morrow is yet in the womb, and may never see the birth for you and me. We must make the most of to-day; the present is all that we can call our own.

Temptations will come. Former bad habits will assert themselves, and will endeavor to gain over us their former control. The twilight of Calvary was overclouding our Lord at Bethlehem, the shadow of the skull-shaped hill of Golgotha creeping towards Him even then. In the person of His Immaculate Mother, He was despised and rejected by the people of Bethlehem on Christmas night, just as years later He was rejected and despised by the people of Jerusalem. We are His followers. We must accompany Him from Bethlehem to Calvary, and thence to heaven. We, who have heard the angels' Christmas songs, must see the ignominy of His cross.

Even now in the beginning of our New Year, even now as we yet stand at the Crib of Beth-

lehem, we feel the chilly damp of a shadow from our Calvary stealing over our souls. We shall be severely tempted, and we must fight a hard battle—a battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil. "Know you not," says Saint Paul, "that they that run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain. And every one that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things; and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible one."

Like athletes, we must bring our bodies into subjection if we wish to win in our race for the crown of eternal life in heaven. We have strong antagonists in the fiends of hell, and we must prevail against them, if we do not wish to become castaways for everlasting fire. But we must fight only to-day's battle, and though the fight be hard, we receive much help from on high. God has said, "Ask and you shall receive;" if we ask assistance in our struggles, God's favoring hand will not be wanting. And if we conquer to-day's temptation, it is an earnest that we shall overcome to-morrow's.

The saints of God are watching over you and me, and are praying for us. They once had bodies like us; they had their New Year days and their New Year resolutions, and they know how difficult it is for poor mortals to keep good resolves. The saints pity and love us, for we are their brethren, separated from them by only

the narrow dividing line of death. The saints had their sorrows and soul-scorching temptations. "But they bore all with patience, and confided more in God than in themselves; knowing that the sufferings of this life bear no proportion to the greatness of the glory to come" (Imitation)—the glory which the saints now enjoy.

They rest now in the blaze of glory before God's throne. The light of faith and of hope has gone out in their souls; only the glow of charity remains—the charity, their all-consuming love for God; charity for us, their struggling brethren of the Church militant. The saints, says Saint Bernard (Serm. 2 de S. Victore), do not so invest themselves with the stole of glory that they at the same time put on forgetfulness of our misery. Heaven is not a land of oblivion. The wide breadth of heaven enlarges hearts, not narrows them in their affections; fills the mind of the saints with delight, but does not alienate them; does not render earthly affections poor and mean, but widens and sublimates them. And our brethren in heaven are watching over you and me and our New Year's resolutions.

With the old dead year, we have cast away our old dead deeds of the flesh; we have put off the old man and put on the new; we have rejected Adam, and taken Christ. Now, forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth ourselves to those that are before, like Saint Paul, we shall press towards the mark, to the prize which awaits God's heroic sons. With the

New Year bells, we have rung into our lives "the valiant man and free, the larger heart, the kindlier hand;" the man valiant in deeds done for God and His Church and His little ones; the man free from vice and corruption; our hearts enlarged with love for our neighbor, our hands more ready to assist him in his needs.

We are now running in the race for salvation, not as at an uncertainty; we are fighting, not as one beating the air. When we shall have fought our good fight; when we have finished our course, having kept the faith, we shall find laid up for us a crown of justice which the Lord, the just Judge, will render in the day of our death to us, and to all who love His coming. "Our judgment on the outskirts of the invisible world will be our Cave of Bethlehem; for then we shall really see His face"— the face that for all eternity will be our beatitude. There will come a New Year for you and me, when we shall not listen to the bells ringing out the news of the old year's close, when you and I shall have lived our last year on earth. God grant that then we may be tasting the joys of the great New Year of eternity, the New Year which is always in its beginning, with no prospect of an end.

2. Our Warfare

A DREAD, awful stillness hangs over the woods; even the leaves of the trees are hushed. Not the twitter of a bird, not the rustle of a wing. No gentle breeze disturbs the motionless grasses. The moon has buried herself in a tomb of clouds. Nature seems breathless.

Now the silence is broken by hurrying footsteps—footsteps that rush over the sleeping grass-blades in this barren valley of Gehenna, this vale of curses. A man, with mad, despairing eyes, pauses for a second under a withered fig-tree; pauses for but a second, then throws a halter over a limb of the tree, and anon, awful sound! the dying moans of a strangling wretch make the night horrible. The moon, with sad face, gazes upon the scene. Now another figure, a hideous demon, advances to the struggling, gasping form suspended from the fig-tree. With a laugh, Satan kisses in mockery the lips growing livid in the agony of death. "Hail, Rabbi!" are the demon's bitter words, and he bends the knee in scorn. The moon, overcome with horror, withdraws to her cloudy chamber, and all is dark and still.

Such was the end of a Christian! Of one who had broken bread at the very table with Christ, of one who had been called to be an apostle, a

vessel of election! Such the death of Judas Iscariot! O miserable Judas, it were better for thee if thou hadst not been born!

Judas died by the halter because he did not resist temptation—the temptation to sins of avarice. Little by little he fell. He carried the purse and the things that were put therein. Into his charge were placed the few possessions of the apostolic band. Had he but resisted in the beginning of temptation; had he put away from him the unworthy thought, he should not have filled a suicide's grave. But no; he listened to the tempter's voice; he pondered on the delights the devil promised, till the spider-like threads of temptation became iron chains, and bound his soul fast. And in the end, his unconquered temptation left him a horrid, ghastly corpse upon a tree.

Fight in the beginning of temptation! That is the sermon the dead Judas preaches. Give no quarter to the devil, or you are lost. "Watch for the serpent's head!" warns St. Augustine. "What is the head? The first suggestion of sin. Crush the viper's head, and you will escape the deadly bite."

Hear the devout Thomas à Kempis: "The enemy is more easily overcome if he be not suffered to enter at the door of our hearts, but be resisted at the very gate at his first knock. Wherefore one said, 'Withstand the beginnings; the remedy is applied too late when the evil has grown strong through long delay' (Ovid). For the first there comes to the mind a bare thought of evil, then a

strong imagination thereof, afterward delight and evil motion, and then consent. And so, by little and little, the wicked enemy gets complete entrance when he is not resisted in the beginning." Do not dally with temptation. The man who hesitates in temptation is lost. We have an enemy within our breast, the fiery concupiscence of the flesh, and that foe of ours is ever too ready to make league with the devil; ever too ready to surrender, like a treacherous sentinel, the fortress of our heart. At the first approach of temptation cry out, with St. Peter, "Lord, save me!"

Flight, not fight, must be our watchword in temptation. In nothing is our poor weakness so revealed as in the battle with hell. The devil is too strong for us, and the sooner we know that the better. It is the prudent man who flees from temptation, nor can he be called a coward for so doing. In the war with temptation, we must be the man who fights and runs away. Virtue that parleys is near a surrender. When we start to dispute with the demon, he at once scribbles our name in his memorandum book. By fleeing we humbly acknowledge our frailty—not to the devil, for he knows only too well what is in man; but we confess to our own proud hearts that, corrupt and flaccid as we have become, through the failure of our leader, Adam, we cannot conquer the tempter by withstanding his attack, but only by withdrawing from the field. Our humility will please our Lord, who ever loves the humble heart, and He will come to our assistance.

Then may we speak of victory, for Satan dreads the standard of the Cross. Our Savior will win the battle for us, but we must call upon His aid. It is like tilting at a windmill for us to fight alone.

Prayer is the Christian's sword, the flaming sword that guards the way to our hearts, and hell shall never prevail against that sword. Prayer lends us an angel's wings, to carry us far above the gross promptings of the flesh. The Book of Proverbs tells us that "a net is spread in vain before the eyes of them that have wings." "The life of man upon earth is a temptation and a warfare," sighs holy Job. But prayer is our shield and breastplate. Good, earnest, steadfast prayer says to the stormy waters of temptation: "Peace, be still."

We must seek for some distraction when we are tempted. We must give as little thought as possible to the temptation. Beware of becoming too familiar with temptation's face. A walk in the summer woods, a bodily task that warms our blood, a conversation that beguiles our cares away —these are really God-given aids, when our minds are harassed with temptation, and our hearts are well-nigh weary of the struggle. Oh, what a safeguard in temptation is the thought of death! the thought that we must die, and stand before a Judge in whose sight the very seraphs are not pure! "No, no, my God," we cry out in the words of the patriarch Joseph, "how can I do this wicked thing, and sin against Thee—Thee whose all-holy eye will one day pierce into the depths of my

soul, when I stand for judgment before Thy throne!" Think of thy last end, and thou shalt never sin.

It is our duty to avoid the proximate occasion of sin. We must not go where there is danger for us. The skater who daringly glides upon ice that is thin we call a fool, and we are not surprised to see him in the freezing water. When we engage a man to drive for us, we do not want the fellow who boasts that he can bring our carriage wheels within an inch of a precipice, and yet not plunge over the brink. How foolhardy is the man who, with eyes open, walks into a swamp! True, he may escape from it, but what a useless risk! A mist enwraps the swamp, and a false step will plunge the incautious adventurer into the mire.

We may go near to a fire without being burnt, but the smoke blackens and defiles us. Too many of us close our eyes, and linger in our peril, forgetting that he who loveth the danger shall perish therein. Too many of us are like the unlucky bird which put its head under a fence-rail, and thought itself hidden from the hunters, till a shot rang out that was the death-knell of the poor quail. God will assist us to flee from temptation, but He will not help us if we remain in the dangerous occasion.

Nor must we lose heart in our temptations, be those temptations never so sore and troublesome. God will not permit us to be tempted above our strength, but with each temptation will give

us grace to come out victorious. Though He place us in the fiery furnace, He will bring us forth from the flames without a scar. As fire trieth iron, so doth temptation try a just man. The Master's eye is on us, never off us, still upon us in our great and dire need. Temptations must come. They follow human nature, and dog our steps. They are like our shadows; but though we cannot get away from our shadows, we can, with God's help, escape our temptations. The answer to the riddle of temptation is God. God has promised to help us, and is He one who promises and does not fulfil? Let us rely upon His word. May He never address to us the reproach: "O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?"

Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. Temptation is not sin. Ah, 'tis one thing to be tempted, quite another thing to fall. We are not contaminated by our temptations. They fatigue and irritate us, but they do not tarnish our soul. Christ, our divine Lord and Savior, was tempted; in all things He was made like unto us, sin alone excepted. Sin alone excepted—where is the heretic that will dare say that Christ's temptation left a blemish upon His soul? Our Redeemer was tempted to show us that our temptations are not sinful.

A glib writer has said: "The easiest way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it." But, alas, what peace do we find by consenting to the evil thought and suggestion? We have drunk salt water to allay our thirst. We have struck down

a hornets' nest, and what rest or sleep can we expect beside the shattered home of the wasps? The forbidden pleasure is Dead Sea fruit, and it turns to bitter ashes on our lips. Darkness has swiftly and suddenly come down and enwrapped our souls, as night and gloomy storm enshroud the weary, footsore wanderer in the desert. Our own hand has written upon our soul the message of our doom—that we have been weighed in the balance and found wanting; that we have given ourselves to the enemy. Oh, now farewell the tranquil mind! Farewell content!

Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. In the midst of temptations, do not become disheartened. You may feel that you are lost in a valley of thorns, but there is a way out. Like the unhappy dove, your poor soul, in the midst of wild wind and stormy dark, may be beaten and tossed over the greedy billows of temptation, but yonder is the Ark, and there shall you find peace and rest again. Temptation often plays the part of the cowardly wolf, which waits till we are weak and exhausted before it attacks us.

"What is the use of fighting?" whispers the tempter, who is trying out all his wiles. "Give in. Holy David fell; the man after God's own heart could not stand the brunt of temptation; he committed adultery, and added to that the detestable crime of murder. The shepherd king who conquered the Philistines could not conquer himself. The warrior king who came out victor-

ious from the struggle with his rebellious subjects, fell before his rebellious flesh; that he could not subdue to his will. Are you holier than David, O man? Acknowledge your inferiority; give to me and to your flesh what your flesh and I demand. See the mighty Solomon, than whom man has not been born with greater wisdom—Solomon who built the temple of the Most High God, who brought down from the seat of glory fire to consume the holocausts and victims—see that great king erecting to the heathen gods and goddesses temples of worship; see that wonderful man bowing down his gray hairs before his lusts; see him drag his aged and decrepid body before Astarthe, the polluted idol—Astarthe, the foul goddess of the Sidonians; the fires of impurity consumed the zeal of Solomon's love for God. Art thou, O man, wiser than the wisest king of Israel? Yield to me."

Oh, the craft of Satan! Lost, his heavenly beauty gone, he still has the intelligence of Lucifer. But hearken not to his words or suggestions. His advice is always that of the wolf which counsels the unwary sheep to send away her dogs. The devil, with all his guile, all his subtle scheming, can do no damage to your soul and mine unless we help him. Let us rely on God. He has said to our arch foe: "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther."

Among some savage nations (Emerson), there is a curious belief that the strength and virility and warlike prowess of a conquered and fallen foe

pass into the sinews and muscles of the conqueror. It is so with temptation. Every evil inclination which we reject adds to our moral strength. If we vanquish to-day's temptation, we need have less fear of to-morrow's. We should not look ahead for temptations, and worry and fret and fume about them. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. Let us take care of to-day, to-morrow will take care of itself. Let us throw ourselves upon our Lord's dear bosom, and whisper to the Sacred Heart:

"Lord, for to-morrow and its needs I do not pray;
Keep me, my God, from stain of sin just for to-day."

Or we shall say, in the words of the great English convert:

"Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene,—one step enough for me."

It is wearisome to think of a long road which we must travel, yet if we cheerfully take it pace by pace, it will seem to lose much of its length. St. Paul, tortured by the sting of the flesh, and buffeted by an angel of Satan, cried out thrice to be delivered; for he was racked by temptation, but God's interior reply was that His grace was sufficient to guard the saint in the warfare. Those temptations increased the merits of the Apostle of the Gentiles; they are jewels shining in his crown to all eternity. The apostle warring against the concupiscence in his members is the

same apostle who was caught up to the third heaven and enjoyed the delights of paradise. Remember in temptation that God's eye is on us. "Resist the devil," says St. James, "and he will fly from you."

Oh, the consolation, the joy according to God, the delights of having struggled with our temptation like valiant men and conquered the corrupt promptings of the flesh that Adam bequeathed to us! What matters it that we wrestled all night with our temptation? Now dawn is breaking in the east; night has fled in his sable cloak, and we are blessed with victory. The longest night has its morning, its golden sunrise; the hardest toil has its ending; the fiercest storm has its calm; the severest temptation has its limits. We have carried our cross, we have gone up to our Calvary, we have won our crown. We have fought the good fight, we have engaged like valiant men in the glorious struggle for our virtue; we may now sheathe our sword, the palm of victory is ours. Victory! victory over ourselves, victory over hell! Now the promise of Him who maketh no promise which He doth not fulfil, that golden promise recorded by St. James, comes to us in a sweet whisper: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he hath been proved he shall receive the crown of life which God hath promised to them that love Him."

3. The Antidote of Death

A KIND, loving heart has always made a strong appeal to even the most callous and embittered souls. All the world can appreciate an act done out of love, an act which is free from the taint of self-seeking. Ruth's filial solicitude for her lone and widowed mother-in-law, Naomi; Jonathan's brotherly affection for the persecuted David; the pious devotion of Eliseus to the prophet Elias; the predilection of Christ for His virgin-disciple, St. John—all these examples of disinterested love have a heart-gripping power even for souls that refuse to recognize the existence of God. Maternal love is made the theme of play and story. Even the cold-hearted world, which never cares to let an unfortunate one escape, condones much weakness when there is much love—forgives many sins because the culprit has loved much.

Greater love than this no man hath that a man lay down his life for his friend. Our Lord died for you and me by a death the most cruel and ignominious, yet that did not satisfy the longings of His Sacred Heart to do us good. At the Last Supper when the fair head of the virgin-disciple was pillowed on the throbbing bosom of the Man-God, at that very moment the great loving heart was filled with the plan which

was to bring rest and peace to our souls—which was to build for us a rock of shelter in a weary land, which was to place in our spiritual world a planet, a sun, to be the source of all light and warmth.

Love took Christ to the garden of Gethsemane, where He endured the torture of the bloody sweat; love tied Him to the pillar, and stripped off His garments, only to robe Him in the royal scarlet of His own blood; love put the crown of thorns upon His brow; love's hand laid the heavy cross on His bruised, aching shoulders, and finally laid Him Himself upon that hard bed of death.

And love, that same everlasting love, brings our Redeemer daily to thousands of hearts and tabernacles throughout the world. Filial love made the Messiah obedient for years in a silent mountain village, and fraternal love has made the same God-Man obedient for centuries in silent altar tabernacles. Love kept our Savior on earth for three and thirty years, and love keeps Him in the Blessed Sacrament, keeps Him with us all days, prolonging His stay of thirty-three years up to the end of time. Well do the saints call Him the Prisoner of Love.

The Blessed Sacrament has put a golden girdle round about the Catholic Church, and holds its members together. All men have sorrows and joys, and the divine Solitary of the tabernacle is every moment of the day receiving His sons and daughters, His saints and sinners, and working miracles of grace and consolation in hearts

that labor with the pangs of sorrow, and are heavy-laden with the load of sin. The Blessed Sacrament is the bridge between the Creator and creatures, between heaven and earth. We have but to put forth our hand, push gently open the church door, and we are at the gate of heaven, kneeling before Him Who is at once our Judge and our Advocate.

The grandest lives have made their best and most efficacious resolutions, kneeling in the glow of the sanctuary lamp, that tiny star which glimmers before the great Sun. While you and I are prostrate before the little tabernacle door, somewhere in the world a valiant woman is on her knees at the altar rail pouring forth her soul to God. She has rejected an advantageous offer of marriage, has spurned the joys of home and husband and children and wealth and ease, has broken family ties, for she heard the still, small voice calling her to the convent, and she answered like Mary, "I come." That beautiful woman who might have been a happy wife, a blessed mother, in a few years will be a pale, lone, wandering nun with no claim upon earth.

Or perhaps while prayers to the Blessed Sacrament are stealing from your lips and mine, a calm-faced boy, some fond mother's joy and pride, is in a quiet chapel making resolutions which are to affect his future, a future of stormy trials and unceasing labors. He is a Francis Xavier of the twentieth century, whose hand will baptize the uncared-for heathen, and who

will die a martyr at the heathen's hand. Like the Prodigal Son, he has received the portion of the inheritance which falleth to him, but unlike the spendthrift of the Gospel narrative, he is spending his money, not on himself, but on the poor.

It is inspiring for you and me to pray before the same Blessed Sacrament as those great, noble souls, making their great, noble resolves. Many a poor heart gone far astray, like a tempest-beaten seabird, with flakes of angry foam on its weary wings, is seeking in vain whereon to rest, because that sad heart turned away from the Blessed Sacrament.

The old Druids thought no church was worthy of God, so they worshiped in the open, in the depths of oak forests, in temples not made with hands. True, no edifice constructed by the art of man is quite good enough for God; but our Savior dwelling on the altar consecrates even the lowliest chapel, so that God, the omnipotent Father, is well pleased with it, and angels love to tarry therein.

That little old church in the forest, with its cracked windows and leaky roof, its cheap gilded statues, its frayed carpets and wheezy melodeon—thither are bright angels trooping, for it is the hour of benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, and the glorious spirits are panting to mingle their sighs of adoration with the spiral wreaths of the sweet incense ascending to the Sacred Host in the monstrance.

Out in the woods, where the timid hares are so free and bold, on that humble wooden altar to-morrow morning, there will be a great sacrifice, a clean oblation offered to God, and the words of the consecrating priest will be a sword to shed again in a mystic way the blood of the redeeming Christ. Swiftly the sacred action will pass, the Mass be completed, and the worshiping faithful will depart, leaving the church quite alone; but our Savior, who promised not to leave us orphans, will remain on the altar, helpless in the Host, trusting to our love and reverence to ward off sacrilege from Him. Helpless He was in the crib at Bethlehem, but more helpless is He on the altar, for as a child, He cried out, but as Bread, He is dumb.

Our Lord is very near to us in the Blessed Eucharist, "in the miraculous coverts of the deep-enfolding sacrament, hiding in the profound recesses of the light thinness of the Host"—just as near to us as He was to the Galileans when He preached in their green fields, or as He was to the Judeans when He suffered and died on their bone-strewn Calvary, or as He was to His followers when in His risen life He haunted the dear, quiet nooks of His own beloved Galilee.

Near He is to us in our churches, but He wishes to come even nearer—to be brought by us into our hearts, to enter under our unworthy roof, and say the word which will heal all the wounds of our soul. He who made us will rest in the tabernacle of our heart. Two thousand

years ago He was laid in the manger of animals, as if He were the food and sustenance of beasts; to-day He is on our altars, in our Communion cups, as meat and drink indeed, food and nourishment for sinners.

He is, oh, so gentle, not commanding, but asking us to receive Him, when He becomes at once our Guest and our Host—our Guest, for we of our own free will have invited Him into our soul; our Host, for He showers favors on us, and not we on Him. As we approach the altar rail, and take up the Communion card, our Lord gladly leaves His altar, surrounded by His angels, who cast welcoming, loving glances at us.

We have received Him in Holy Communion. He is with us now as of old He was in the chaste bosom of His ever-blessed mother. We have Him within our hearts, as the all-holy Virgin had Him in her womb. The blood that redeemed the world, the Sacred Heart that sorrowed over faithless Jerusalem are yours and mine after Communion, for His body is miraculously within ours. We have been dowered with the antidote of death. Truly, no nation hath its gods so nigh to it as our God is to us. O the wonders of divine love! O the depth of the riches, the spiritual treasures, which God hath bestowed on us—our God whose judgments are incomprehensible and whose ways unsearchable!

Monthly, weekly, even daily, our Lord wishes to come to us in Holy Communion. We hear the low, sweet pleading of the tabernacle Prisoner

in the utterance of our Holy Father, Pius X., on daily Communion. It is safe and profitable to receive the Blessed Eucharist very frequently. "Life without the Sacred Host is death; death with the Sacred Host is life."

We must not be content with merely visiting our Lord in His tabernacle prison; we must usher Him in, in His body, soul, and divinity, into our very soul. Blessed are the frequent communicants, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, even in this cold, bleak, storm-swept world. Blessed are those who kneel monthly at the Communion rail, for they shall possess the land God has promised to His elect. More blessed are the weekly communicants, for when mourning and the voice of sorrow come nigh their door, they shall be comforted by the Dispenser of all good gifts, and shall obtain mercy. Most blessed are those who communicate daily, for they shall see God even in this life by being raised through grace to the heights of contemplation. Their lives shall be lives of such peace that men will exclaim, "Indeed, these are the children of God."

Frequent Communion takes away the terror from the grave. Death touches us; but since our Judge and Savior has so frequently and gladly come to us, now we are ready, nay glad, to go to Him. "What else will the grand ceremony of our entrance into eternity be but simply the unveiling of the Blessed Sacrament?" We gaze for one last lingering moment at our Lord under His white mask in the sacred Host, then close

our weary eyelids, and for us eternity begins. The white mask of bread, always so thin and filmy to the eyes of faith, is gone now. We no longer see darkly through a glass; we have entered within the veil. We are prostrated at the feet of Christ, while our guardian angel gives testimony: "Jesus of Nazareth, crucified Son of man, glorified Son of God, this precious soul, strong in Thy sacramental strength, has crucified her flesh with the vices and concupiscences thereof. Receive her into Thy joy."

4. Scandal

THERE are two kinds of scandal—the scandal our wicked lives give to the innocent, and the scandal our no less wicked tongues spread. Both are fruitful of evil; the scandal of our lives has slain its thousands, but the scandal of our tongues has slain its tens of thousands. To-day I shall speak only of scandal of the tongue.

Scandal is a sort of foul-winged bird, a harpy black with the blackness of hell. It has a thousand wings, so that this raven, old beyond the years of the gray hills, flies swifter than the wind. The demon of scandal has a thousand eyes, a thousand ears, a thousand tongues—basilisk eyes that kill with a stare; ears that hear the very grass growing; tongues whose edge is sharper than the sword, and more venomous than all the worms of Nile.

With all her tongues wagging, this fearful curse wings through the valley of the world. She flies in at palace windows; she stops with equal pace at the cottage gate; she stays her footsteps at the broken door of the hovel. And everywhere she sets her foot, she leaves filth like unto the slime which the caterpillar trails over the flowers. In her wake follow wars and rumors of wars.

The food of scandal is human hearts and souls. She drags from poor, wind-swept graves

the bones of the dead, and with ghoulish glee feasts on the forgotten ashes. Worse than the bite of the gnat, the sting of the wasp, the blow of the serpent—far worse is a single tongue of scandal.

Scandal is a gehenna wherein souls are seared and blasted; a simoon whose baleful breath so often destroys the flowers of virtue; a canker which eats away all that is good and noble.

Most women are too fond of scandal and gossip which borders on scandal—women, as the Apostle of the Gentiles says, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. When women get together how quick they are to regale the minds of one another with juicy bits of what can hardly be called scandal, but is so near scandal that there is no other name for it! Let a woman receive the faintest whisper of some neighbor's shortcoming, and the news is "as an arrow that sticketh in a man's thigh;" she must get rid of it. And a great many men, a very great many, are no better in this respect than the women. Too many men and women belong to "that modern sect of Flagellants who make a ritual of lashing, not themselves, but all their neighbors." We never stop to consider whether a rumor is well founded. Rumor, we ought to know, is rarely correct, and then only by accident.

Ah, 'tis easy to say those words which do so much harm, and can never be recalled; easy

to blacken that fair character, that delicate lily blooming, sweet and pure, in the fields of morality. Take a pillow of white down feathers. Open the pillow, and let the four winds of heaven scatter the feathers far and wide. The feathers are spread miles apart, and are defiled with mud and filth. You can never again gather up the feathers, and restore them to the pillow in their former purity. Yet that would be an easier task than to take back and erase from memory the scandalous words you have uttered. Stand by a deep well, and drop down into the crystal clearness pebbles and stones. It's easy and pleasant, but then try to get out the stones again. So words slip from our lips into the willing ears of a world that loves scandal, and those words are gone from us forever, never, never to be recalled.

A mission father once told me of an unfortunate girl whose life was spoiled, not entirely through her own fault, but partly through the fault of another. Every door closed against her, this unhappy Hagar wandered forth from her natal village. She reached a town miles away and settled there. Poor Hagar, a messenger from God in the shape of a holy priest, spoke words of hope to her, and she wept the tears of the penitent—such tears as St. Bernard calls "the wine of angels." But a woman's merciless gossiping tongue brought from afar tidings of the dead and buried scandal. Her words resurrected the long-atoned-for sin. One morning the miserable girl was found dead by her own hand. A pitiful note

lay near: "It's no use. I tried to begin all over, and thought I had succeeded, but my crime has found me out again. Like a restless ghost, it haunts my footsteps."

Think what the gossip tongue did! It were kinder to have plunged a dagger into that girl's heart, for then only her life, and not her honor, would have been taken away. The gossip had filched that which did not enrich her, and had made poor indeed that struggling soul. Who knows but that cruel wrong will plead, like angels trumpet-tongued, before Him who shall come to judge the world; who shall mete out to us as we have meted out to our neighbor; who hath said: "As ye do to others, so shall ye be done by"? Some men's sins, says the holy Scripture, are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and some men they follow after.

The scandalous tongue is a two-edged sword, cutting down perhaps those nearest and dearest to God's heart—as long ago envious, jealous, lying, vindictive, scandalous tongues murdered sweet Joan of Arc. At every word of a scandalous conversation, perhaps a reputation dies. No one is safe from the scandalous tongue, neither you nor I.

The innocent girl is not spared. She is scandalized, and in sheer desperation she rushes into an unhappy marriage, to hide herself under a husband's name; to use a strong man as her shield. The reputation of children is blackened in all eyes, sometimes even in the eyes of their

parents. The priest at the altar, the man who is striving hourly to be more and more like his Master, is not spared by the tongue of scandal. His fair fame is impugned; his reputation is blasted, and he must go far away to begin his lifework all over again; for a priest without reputation is an instrument of little or no good. Carrying the cross which an unholy hand has laid on his helpless shoulder, the priest goes up to his Calvary; and the scandalous tongue wags on.

"He eats with the publicans and harlots," sneered the jealous Pharisee, using the subtle weapon of scandal against the white reputation of the Prophet of Galilee. "He may appear to the eye to be fairly decent, but—" And then there was a shutting of hypocritical eyes, a lifting of mockingly pious hands, and a shrugging of sanctimonious shoulders, all of which was very significant. The enemies of our blessed Lord dared not attack his reputation openly, so by hint and innuendo they endeavored to sap its foundations. If they could but loosen a few of the stones under that pillar of good repute, the whole structure must needs sooner or later topple and fall.

There are Pharisees living in this twentieth century who follow the same course of conduct. By indirect attack, by hinting words and smiles, they lay waste fair characters. No open word of reproach can be breathed against those characters, so the indirect, slower, but no less fatal method is used. In Owen Meredith's beautiful story, *Lucile*, the villain by one triumphant, mock-

ing look destroys the heroine's character in the estimation of the hero, and two hearts are estranged, two lives spoiled.

Besides the scandalous tongue, there is the scandalous ear—I mean the ear which is ever itching to hear scandal; the ear which is ever ready to learn the downfall or supposed downfall of some foe or friend. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. We are prone to hearken to scandals of our friends, aye, of even our relatives. Which is the worse, I wonder, in the sight of God—the glib tongue discoursing scandal or the eager listening ear? If there were no one to listen, assuredly there would be no one to spread scandal. How many people are there in the world who can chat together an hour without damaging the character of their neighbor? From lip to lip the scandal flies; on, on, ever increasing like a snowball running downhill. A rumor without a leg to stand on becomes a sturdy giant with seven league boots; the rumor is now an undoubted fact.

"They say," is the current phrase. Who are "they"? 'Twould be a long and weary search to run to earth the beginning of a rumor. "They say that—" and thus the rumor spreads like a fearful cancer, growing stronger and stronger.

Thomas à Kempis warns: "We should not believe every man's word, nor presently tell others the things which we have heard or believed." If we are so weak as to let scandals enter our right ear, then with all speed we should

unlock our left ear, and permit the scandals to escape. If we think over and brood on what we have heard, then it will be a miracle if we do not speak of the gossip again; for our thoughts must have an outlet, which our tongue is ever ready to furnish. But the better way is not to listen to scandal. It requires a great deal of moral courage and tact sometimes to hush the lips of the scandal-monger. But we need not be rude. We can listen until a favorable opportunity presents itself for changing the subject. Then we can take advantage of our chance, and with tactful turn naturally begin on another theme.

I am sure the poor recording angels are kept busy writing down the slips of speech in a spiritual way, the idle, damaging words, when some of my readers come together for conversation. Some men whistle for want of thought; very many women and men talk scandal for want of reflection. Scandal is the great white plague in the spiritual world. It is fatal to both speaker and listener, for the listener easily becomes the speaker, and so on, until the scandal, like the leak in the dike, spreads beyond control.

We are all brothers and sisters, all children of Holy Mother Church—one Lord, one faith, one baptism. The same dear Mother Church received us into her tender bosom at the baptismal font; she wipes away our postbaptismal faults in her sacrament of penance; she nourishes our hungry souls with the heavenly Manna from her Holy of holies. Many grains of wheat are

pounded together to make one bread, so we who partake of the same divine Bread which comes down from heaven, should be as one man—every man assisting his brother in this warfare we are waging so fiercely here below. Shall we re-enact the tragedy of Cain and Abel, one brother slay the other? Shall you and I kneel down to pray, and fold before the altar our hands tinged with the blood of our brother's character. God forbid, God forbid!

Let us examine our conscience well on this besetting sin. Perhaps we have sinned less through malice than through inadvertence; but we shall resolve never to do so again. If the pale face and wan eyes of conscience glare into ours, and there is accusation trembling on the blue cold lips; if the tongue of conscience—that still small voice which cuts like a knife, and doth make cowards of us all—if it says to us as the Prophet Nathan said to King David: "Thou art the guilty one," then with God's ever-prompt assistance, we will commit such sins no more.

5. Our Brother's Keeper

A MOUNTAIN on the tops of mountains, a city built on a hill, cannot be hidden. They are there for all the world to see. The glaring sun beats down on the high places, and eyes in the valley discern the mountain even from afar off. For a time, a mist may obscure the lofty city, but only for a time. The fog clears away, and there is the city boldly outlined.

So with the lives of men. Eyes are ever watching you and me; innocent eyes that look to you and me for edification; bad, suspicious eyes that are trying to pick flaws in our conduct, and make sins where there are none. Our lives may be and necessarily are as a closed book to many, aye, to most people, but to certain ones our lives are open and well known, and our influence with those persons is accordingly for good or bad.

The salvation of every soul is in her own hands; no soul is lost but through her own fault; yet you and I can assist many souls, and draw them nearer to God by our lives, or drive them farther along the road to eternal ruin by our evil conduct. Who shall say, then, that we are not our brother's keeper? Charity binds us to edify all our brethren. Justice in some cases demands that edification from us.

Witness the father of a family coming into his home drunk. His boys, who look up to him as their model, are quivering in terror, and quite bewildered. Their young guileless minds are tainted with the foul language that falls, like serpents and toads, from his lips. The drink-crazed father may even lift his hand to the mother of his children—the woman whom he swore to love and protect. That scene makes a deep and lasting impression on the wax-like memories of those boys. One needs ponder little to realize the great sin of scandal that father commits. And the warning of Christ is as terrible now as it was when it fell from His divine lips centuries ago: "He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea."

Or the little daughter is an attentive listener while her mother and a neighbor enjoy gossip which is unkind, very likely untrue, very disedifying, and mightily damaging to the character of some absent girl or woman. It is surprising what apt imitators children are, particularly girl children. The son is proudly called a chip of the old block. The daughter is said to recall her mother's girlhood.

But what of the sins of the father's visited on the children? What of the sins of scandal? The boy may be a slip that will grow into a very vine of Bacchus, a youth that will sow bar-

ley-corn wild oats, a child with the vices of a man; all because of his father's scandalous example. The girl may be a bud that will blossom into a veritable Mrs. Grundy, a scandal-monger that will upset the hearts and homes of every woman living within a radius of a mile, a girl whose tongue will be a worse scourge to a parish than even Attila was; and all because of her mother's shiningly bad example.

Older brothers and sisters to whom the younger ones naturally look up, give occasion of scandal to the youthful innocents. I wonder if the patriarch Joseph ever forgot the treachery, depravity, and low scheming of his elder brethren, when they sold him into Egypt? True, Joseph forgave them their sin; but the childish brain had been too deeply impressed by the deed ever to forget, and his memory carried that crime till he died at the age of one hundred and ten years.

Let us hope the older brothers are always careful of their conversation, their language never obscene or smutty, but particularly so when the more youthful ones are within earshot. Frantic fits of anger, impudent, disobedient words and remarks to parents, irreverent comments on priests and nuns—these should always be avoided, but especially when young children are listening.

The joke papers are full of far-fetched witticisms about the schoolmarm, the perfumed school mistress, and her labors in teaching the young idea how to shoot. But the school teacher

has a lasting influence on the life of a child. Hers is a great, good work. The planting may be wearisome labor at times, but the harvest is always encouraging. The conduct of the teachers, male and female, is not lost on the child's impressionable mind, and the actions of the schoolmaster or mistress always speak louder than words to the child.

Hawthorne has written a story of a beautiful woman whose cloak gracefully draped about her shoulders, spread smallpox. That is what the lives of some of our lukewarm and openly sinful Catholics do. Many a non-Catholic about to enter the Church is stopped at the very threshold by the scandalous life of a member of the true Church. "Other sheep have I which are not of this fold," said our Blessed Lord. "They also shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." But those sheep about to come into the true fold are horrified and stunned at seeing in that fold a ravening wolf in the clothing of a sheep. Then the courage of the neophyte wanes, and that soul may never come again, may die outside the fold, and the precious promptings of grace be lost forever.

The saints were not easily scandalized. They realized that all flesh is grass and wont to fail; that man is a fair flower which strikes the sight, but on examination may be found to have concealed near its heart a foul, devouring worm. There are to-day also many staunch, strong Catholics, firmly grounded and rooted in their faith,

who cling to the cross, when the waves of a great scandal dash into their face and eyes.

Not so many years ago, a prominent Episcopalian minister became a convert to Catholicity. He seemed to be an earnest man, and his good example brought his wife into the Church with him. He had been a Catholic some years, and had done much good with his tongue and pen, on the lecture platform and in the editorial chair, so much good that a holy bishop wrote to him, and suggested that he become a priest. The convert laughingly returned a photograph of his wife and children under which was written: "A stumbling block."

Then the convert played the role of the pig when it's washed—he went back into the mud. He put his hand to the plow, but then turned away. He found an affinity, a soul mate. The French triangle, you see—two women and one man. He left his wife, and went off with a younger woman. The wife bore her cross meekly, and followed the red footprints of her Savior up to Calvary. The hand that led her into the true Church, and pointed out to her the way of eternal life, was the selfsame hand that dealt the death-blow to her happiness in this world. But that sin of scandal only drew her closer to the dear old Church.

When we see scandal we ought, like the convert's wife, to close our eyes to it. Pondering on the scandal our neighbor gives fills our own heart with bitterness, and does no good for us or

for the world. Next to giving scandal, there is nothing makes us more unhappy than taking scandal. It is foolish, childish; it makes us peevish with God to take scandal—to be shocked by what our neighbor does. And we may be mistaken; our ready judgment may be a rash punishment.

One always feels more or less inclined to suspect the integrity and motives of the man who too vehemently denounces the scandal-giving sinner.

When the woman taken in adultery was dragged in before our Lord, that He might condemn her, a tradition tells us that three of the self-righteous Jews in particular clamored for her blood. Our Lord stooped down, and wrote upon the sand the only line he ever wrote, and the accusing Jews "went out, one by one, beginning at the eldest even unto the last." Our Savior had written the secret sin of every one present, the pet vice or long-buried crime of every single canting hypocrite.

That supercilious, cold Pharisee there who strove for the stoning of the sinful woman, is quietly stealing away, like a silent shadow. His face is blanched, and his eyes are starting. He has read the fearful accusation staring from the sand: "In the lone wilderness, where no eye but God's could see, thou didst treacherously deal thy best friend a murderous blow, and bury him where no man could find his grave."

And that other avaricious-looking, beady-eyed Shylock is departing without a murmur. He has seen in the sand: "Avaunt, O purse-proud liar, thou didst cheat and rob a helpless widow, and take from over her holy and venerable head the very roof that sheltered her."

See that other low-browed, thick-lipped, sensual son of Abraham hiding his quivering, telltale, guilty mouth behind his cruel hand. The sand has betrayed the dark corner in his heart: "Thou who clamorest for the execution of this adulteress, art thyself an adulterer. Thou art a foul pestilence in the sight of the God of Israel, because from the depths of thy dead and corrupting soul rises up to heaven the stench of a most shameful adultery—an adultery where the sin was all thine, because thou didst use force."

And so the loud-mouthed denouncers fled, and Christ and the pale woman were alone, misery and mercy face to face.

That scene returns vividly to our minds, when we hear a man or woman pouring fire and brimstone on the head of a seemingly delinquent neighbor.

We ought to make two resolutions, and frequently renew them: First, that, so far as our poor weak human nature will allow, we shall never give scandal to the souls for whom Christ died; second, that we shall close our eyes when we see scandal, and not hug that scandal to our bosom, as if it were something sweet to us.

No, we will never, so help us heaven, slay souls for whom the Son of God shed the last drop of His precious blood—innocent, good souls that would be poisoned by scandal in our lives; fresh, sweet, blooming young plants ready to bring forth fruit a hundredfold for God, when our conduct might blight the buds and blossoms, and leave only barrenness and ruin. No, we shall increase the kingdom of God on earth by our virtuous lives, letting our good deeds shine unconsciously before men, letting our devout presence at Mass and frequently at the Communion rail encourage others to follow in our steps—our praiseworthy actions, like the shadow of a saint, healing and soothing world-worn and weary, sinful hearts. And we shall not look with shocked, yet complacent eyes on the scandal another gives, remembering that temptation is strong, and the flesh weak; recalling that Magdalen had given more scandal than Judas, yet one to-day is very near the queen of heaven, while for the other, it were better he had not been born. The Pharisee in the temple who thanked God that he was better than the scandal-giving publican, is not exactly an appealing picture.

The "Imitation of Christ" warns us: "The time will come when Christ, the Master of masters, will appear to hear the lessons of all men; that is, to examine the conscience of every one," —the conscience of him who scandalizes, and of him to whom the scandal is given. Like little children, we shall all come to our Teacher, and

stand in His awful presence, with fear in our countenances and love swelling in our hearts. Down deep into those hearts will pierce the Master's powerful, all-penetrating, sunlike eyes, searching out and noting every stain.

Please God, then, though the Master find the book of our lives dog-eared and torn and frayed, we shall have learned the lessons He taught us by His Gospel and His Church, His infallible, inspired word and His no less infallible, inspired tradition. If we keep that vital moment of judgment before us, you and I shall fear to spread scandal by our own lives, and we shall not have time to note the scandals of others.

6. The Honor of Our People

WHEN our Lord was speaking with His accustomed eloquence and unction, a woman, very likely a mother, moved beyond control by His words, cried out: "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck!" Blessed the mother of so glorious a Son! Blessed the woman who can look upon Thee with happy, maternal eyes, and say: "This is my Son whom God hath given unto me. He is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." But our Lord, turning to the excited woman, corrected her mildly: "Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it." My Mother feels herself blessed in her child, from henceforth all nations shall call her blessed; but she is happier in her many virtues, her obedience, her humility, her purity, than even in her dignity as mother.

No one in that crowd about our Savior, not even the woman who cried out so boldly, realized the numerous and brilliant virtues of the absent Mother of the young Prophet. How could they know? She was hidden, pondering in her heart the words of her divine Son, and in spirit following Him in His teachings. Christ was and is the principle of all grace and holiness. St. Thomas Aquinas observes that the nearer anything approaches to its principle, the more does it par-

take of the effect of that principle. What creature was ever nearer to our Lord than the Blessed Virgin? He received from her His human nature, and she received from Him the greatest fullness of grace—more grace than the grace of all the saints together, says St. Bernard. Many of the chosen children of God had heaped up riches of sanctity, but she surpassed them all.

Christ received from Mary all that a creature could give her God. She spoke, "Fiat!" and as in the beginning, there was made Light. "Let there be Light," she said, and from her word rose the Sun of Justice. The earth was void and empty, a land dark and covered with the mist of eternal death. And Mary said: "Be Light made," when lo! the Holy Ghost came upon her, and the Spirit of the Most High God overshadowed her, and the east was touched with the light of hope. The angel whose golden *Ave* had rung sweetly into the ravished ear of midnight, had re-ascended to heaven, and in his place had descended the Lord of Angels. Mary was now the tabernacle of God; the gate between heaven and earth by which the Creator entered into His creation; the road which led Christ from His heavenly Jerusalem to the sad Jericho of the world, where He should die between two robbers. She was the chosen aqueduct of that grace which was to inundate the world; her heart the fountain of the precious blood which was to redeem lost Israel and the raging heathen.

Blooming in the green fields, surrounded by the sequestered mountains of Nazareth, the Lily of Israel was an obscure flower. The temple of the Lord was in far-off Jerusalem, with the smoke of its sacrifice rising up, to adore the Lord of the temple who was in the holy of holies of a maiden's bosom at despised Nazareth—a maiden who was longing to see the human face of the unborn God, the God who had looked down through the ages, and found only one breast worthy to become the resting place of His sacred Heart and Head. Yet she who was among created things the most perfect production of divine power, saving her Son's humanity, was so overwhelmed by the divine Omnipotence so intimately near, her mind so absorbed by the perfections of the Majesty in her womb, that in her own eyes, she appeared the most worthless of mortals.

God's choice of Mary ought to show us that the great Queen of Heaven was ornamented with all the virtues of which a mere creature was capable. Supernatural gifts were scattered upon her way like sands upon the wide seashore. Her treasures, we must bear in mind, came from the inexhaustible stores of God, and were selected by the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity for her whom He selected from eternity to become His Mother.

Yet foes of Catholicity sneer that our honoring the creature leads us from the Creator, that our love of the Mother distracts our love of the Son. Those narrow-visioned heretics forget that

devotion to Mary had its source in the Heart of our Lord. When He fled as an exile over the desert sand into the shades of Egypt from the murderous clutching hand of Herod, Mary's sad bosom was His chariot. Under the shadow of Mary's wings, He hid at Nazareth, God's paradise below, safe from His Pharisaic foes who, like Herod, would have slain Him ere His work was done.

He passed ten times as much of His life with Mary as He did with the apostles, the founders of His Church. Of His thirty-three years on earth, only three were spent with Peter and John and the other apostles, whereas thirty were given to Mary. For three years, He was the great Prophet arisen from Galilee, a second dauntless Elias; but for thirty years was He the obedient Son of Mary. St. John, at the close of his Gospel, says: "But there are also many things which Jesus did; which, if they were written, every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written." Oh, that we had the precious unwritten works of our Lord and Savior,—everything He did and said! Then His loving and frequent conferences with His Mother would be ours.

Christ, in return for the humanity which Mary gave Him, bestowed on her wonderful powers of endurance, the grace and strength to suffer her seven dolors. Her sorrows were the nearest approach of a creature's agony to the Savior's passion. From the hour of her first dolor, when

the sword of Simeon's prophecy pierced her tender heart, to the soul-racking hour, when the divine Victim of sin was laid in a tomb not His own, Jesus was ever gratefully bestowing grace after grace upon His Mother.

There was joy leaping from the Babe's eyes in the crib into the soul of Mary, joy that the world's redemption through her had begun; and there was a faint gleam of that same joy in those divine orbs on Calvary, joy that the world's redemption was completed, though on the cross those failing, drooping, languid eyes, His ever-mindful love could hardly guide to His Mother's face in the darkness. That solemn afternoon, the Son broke His Mother's heart, that it might become larger to hold her children, greater and deeper in love for the fallen race of mankind; that she might never forget the second maternity, which had its pangs of travail on Golgotha; that she might ever be the more tender towards us, for the very agony we cost her, when she heard her God say: "Woman, behold thy son;" every child born into the world is now thine in the place of Him whom you carried in the flesh.

How like Mary was to Jesus in many ways! She bore Him who bore the weight of our sins. He had her features, her movements. In His humanity, He reflected her; in her virtues, she reflected Him. He was the sun, she the moon; the light of her life was but the reflection of His. Her bright spiritual beauty, her glorious sanctity, is the glow shed upon her by Him whom she had

mothered—Him whose joy it was to have rescued her from sin by never letting it touch her, and to have saved her from the guile of Satan by never allowing the serpent to approach this second, stainless Eve. When the Sinless came to save the sinner, He could not travel to us by the way of sin, so He came by the road of innocence.

Great was the influence Mary had with her divine Son in this world. At her scarcely expressed wish, He worked His first miracle, though as He Himself said, His hour was not yet come. Her solicitude at the marriage feast of Cana, lest the bride and groom should be embarrassed, and put to shame before their guests, moved our Lord to change the water into wine. Jesus looked down into the crystal depths of the stone pots, and "the modest water saw its God and blushed." Who but the Virgin Mother would have dared to ask the Master to anticipate His time? Now the happy Mother who received the Savior into the world, and at the time of her assumption, was received by the Savior into heaven, is near her Son, and the greatness of her influence, the might of her intercession, has not waned. Inspired with the great confidence of St. Bernard, we must fly to her protection, implore her help, and seek her prayers, and we shall not be left unaided.

Christ was Mary's natural Son. We are her adopted children. The childbirth on Christmas at Bethlehem was painless; but she suffered bitter throes in becoming mother of us all, her second-born. St. John represented us on Calvary,

and from the hour of our Redeemer's death he took Mary as his own mother and as ours. We ought never to do anything unbecoming the children of such a mother. She is the mother of mercy, our hope, and to her we must send up our sighs from this valley of tears. Repentant sinners ascend to the Savior through Mary, as the Savior descended through Mary to repentant sinners. Though the moon is in the distant heavens, nevertheless her soft silver gaze is fastened on the storm-troubled, foaming sea; so beams down the light of Mary's maternal, anxious love on this temptation-tossed ocean of life and the frail bark of our soul. The two thieves dying on twin crosses, to right and left of the Redeemer, were her sons, yet how different the end of each! To one was made the golden promise of paradise; over the fate of the other, the evangelist mercifully draws a veil. Thus died those sons of Mary before her very eyes.

We must behave now as true sons of Mary, if we wish her to look on our dying agony with eyes of hope, as she did on the death of the penitent thief. With her help and prayers, we will avoid mortal sin. We will carry her rosary everywhere with us, and say it daily. We will wear her scapular, and go to the altar rail often in her honor. Those practices long sustained will endear us to the Blessed Virgin.

When we receive the Blessed Sacrament, we will try to make ourselves like Mary, the first tabernacle of our Lord. When loneliness and des-

olation come upon our soul, we will ponder the dreary years the weary mother passed after her Son's resurrection, those long, tedious years of martyrdom spent in silent suffering and longing for her Son. And when we have received our Lord for the last time on earth in our Viaticum, and still holding Him in our bosom, as the Mother did her unborn Babe, we are panting to see His face, she will lead us to His feet, and show us those blessed features which rejoiced her heart in Bethlehem, Egypt, and Nazareth. Burdened with our soul, she will present us to Him who was her burden over the desert sands in her flight to the land of the Nile; and we shall be numbered among Mary's devoted clients who sing: "Thou art the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem, thou art the joy of fighting Israel, thou art the honor of our people, daughter of the Father, Mother of the Son, spouse of the Holy Ghost!"

7. The Failure That is Triumph

THERE is a touching scene in the tragedy of "Hamlet," when the sinful king rises from his knees discouraged, and laments:

> *"My words fly up, my thoughts remain below;*
> *Words without thoughts never to heaven go."*

The king had tried to pray and failed. Many a one of us has had the same experience. Spiritual dryness and distractions come upon us, and we find our lips mumbling words, words, and nothing else; our thoughts are far from our God, and yet we have tried to pray, have tried to cast out of our heart all dangerous and distracting imaginations, and to speak to our God as creature with Creator.

Prayer is usually defined as the lifting of our heart and mind to God. Perhaps it were a better definition to say the attempt to lift our minds and hearts to God. Yes, the mere attempt to pray is a prayer in God's eyes. We are doing what we can; man cannot do more than his best. Our love for God, weak and imperfect though it be, has brought us to our knees, and many shortcomings and failings in our prayer will be forgiven us because of that love.

God looks at our intentions, not at our works. Thomas à Kempis tells us that the Divine Master

considers more the love of the giver than the gift of the lover—the love with which we do a thing rather than the thing we do. We must remember that God needs nothing from us; we need Him.

The Pharisee standing in the Temple displaying his person, and vaunting his good deeds, seemed by his fasts and alms to be doing great things for God; but the lowly publican, creeping afar off into the shadows and striking his breast, added more to God's accidental glory by his unseen action than the ostentatious fasts and public penances of seventy times seven Pharisees. To such as the Pharisee our Lord says: "Amen, they have their reward—their reward in the good estimation of men, but I know them not; no heavenly crown do I promise for such deeds."

Effort counts with God; the issue or outcome, the failure or the success, is what men consider.

When the weary and haggard fishermen on the lake of Genesareth had labored all the night, and had taken nothing, they were discouraged and considered their night wasted. But next morning came the Sun of Justice, the Light of the World, who had watched their toiling throughout the chilly night, and who had numbered every sigh that stole unbidden from their patient lips, and had noted perhaps the boyish tears that filled the eyes of the tender youth, Saint John. After the night of disappointment, after the severe trial, they enclosed a very great multitude of fishes—a multitude greater than they had ever taken before—a multitude so numerous that the

strong strings of the nets broke, and the ships sank so low beneath the weight that the waves almost engulfed the fishermen. And on that morning, the morning after the night of gloom and disheartening labor, the toilers left their homely nets in Galilee, and took up the grace-woven nets of the Almighty to become fishers of men, fishing not for the silver-scaled creatures of the sea, but for souls.

If an author engages a boy to do copying for him on the typewriter, and the illiterate boy clicks away at random, leaving out whole important sentences, and typing in words which are not according to the writer's draft, emphatically does the author pronounce the copyist a failure, because no editor, even the least cross-grained man, would have patience to wade through such manuscript. And the boy is a failure—a failure even though his eyes are bloodshot from the strain, and his back aching from the cramped position, and his brain whirling from the long hours of unmitigated toil. The boy has done the best he could; but he has only displeased and irritated his highly esthetic and nervous employer, who scarce resists the temptation to box the child's ears.

God is not that sort of Lord; He is not a Taskmaster. When we come to Him with our broken resolutions which we have mended—oh, so badly!—and our poor prayers which we have said so coldly and with so many distractions; and we are ready to weep with desolation of soul,

in God's eyes shines out the love of a Father. We are His adopted sons, co-heirs with His own dear Christ—and He takes us to His heart with the words: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," well done, well done!

Let our resolution be that, when distractions settle down upon us, like a flock of screaming furies from the shores of darkness, we will pray on only the more confidently and earnestly. Our lips will move and murmur the Holy Name when our minds are too clouded and confused by distractions and temptations to attend to what we say. Cowper tells us:

> *"Satan trembles when he sees*
> *The weakest saint upon his knees."*

For while there is prayer, there is hope of salvation. Prayer keeps from us the avenging hand of God, whose justice our sins have provoked.

"The continual prayer of a just man availeth much," says St. James. "If you shall ask Me anything in My name, that will I do," said our Lord at the Last Supper. Our Savior does not mean by those words that He will grant every request, that He will lend His ear to every petition, good, bad, or indifferent. "Ask in My name," He warns; that is, ask Me for gifts remembering that I am your God, and know what is best for you. All good gifts are from Me. What will benefit you for eternity, that shall you have.

Why, if God gave some of us the temporal so-called goods that we desire, we should lose our soul and later blaspheme Him in hell. "What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue!" (Edmund Burke.) We do not give children edge tools to play with. The baby that roars for the razor, and kicks the floor with his tiny foot, and beats his pudgy little fists together, wants what he considers a pretty toy. He sees only the glitter of the steel in the sunlight. He knows nothing of the cruel, death-dealing qualities of the blade. So, too, do we, children that see through a glass darkly, so do we desire the dangerous gewgaws of life. But our prayers are never wasted. We may not get the very thing we desire, the thing we have asked for, but God will give us a better thing. We forget the prayers we have said, but they come back to us in graces that we do not expect. "What man is there among you," says our Lord, "who, if his son shall ask bread, will he reach him a stone? Or if he shall ask him a fish, will he reach him a serpent? If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children: how much more will your Father who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask Him?"

We should pray always. Some people pray so seldom that one would think they were afflicted with sore knees. Be that as it may, those who pray so little are usually the weak-kneed Catholics. Some people had rather walk an hour to get to a cheap vaudeville show, where they waste their time, than kneel for five minutes to put them-

selves in the presence of God and pray. An hour of exertion to get to an amusement leaves those persons too tired to pray for five minutes. Yet our Lord has cautioned us that we ought always to pray.

Does He mean that we should be continuously on our knees, our hands clasped, our eyes closed? Does He mean that we should copy from St. Simeon Stylites, who stood on his lofty pillar, with only the heavens about him, and earth far below —the pillarist anchorite who remained far from the madding crowd, forgotten by the world for whom he prayed? Does God, who put us in this world to perform the duties of our state, ask us to neglect those duties that we may pray to Him? Far be the thought from us. That man prays little who prays only when he bends his knee.

To labor is to pray. God never asks us to do the impossible. In fact, He is always and ever contented with little, just as He meekly bore with all the imperfections and shortcomings and fallings-off and worldly ideas of His first followers, upon whom He was to erect His Church, into whose custody He was to give His holy and beautiful Bride. God looks at our intentions, not our works. "Every moment of time may be made to bear the burden of something which is eternal." We can work for God. We can perform for Him every task, pleasant or annoying, welcome or irksome. We can set the Lord always in our sight. Every breath we draw, every meal we eat, every night's rest we take, can give glory

to God, and does give glory to Him, if only we have the proper intention.

We need not necessarily think of God all during the work or action. At the beginning of the task, we might raise our thoughts to God, saying even without a movement of the lips: "For Thee, O Lord; for Thy greater honor and glory, I do this." We can sanctify our days by resolving in the morning to perform all the acts of that day for God. That supernatural intention gives a supernatural value to the poorest action our poor human nature performs that day. When we lie down at night, a moment's prayer will draw God's angels nearer to us during the hours of rest, and those recording spirits, those guardians of men, will number and write down with a golden pen our heart-beats which are all in God's honor. We need only say: "Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit," and our sleep is holy. And when we "Think that To-Day will never dawn again" (Dante), we ought to realize the value of every passing second, and gain all the merits we can, for our eternity depends on those brief seconds which die in their very birth, which run from us more swiftly than sunbeams.

Many sinners have saved their souls through ejaculatory prayers—those pious little ejaculations which can be said in a moment. "The saints speak to us in their biographies, and we speak to them in our prayers." The saints, as is very evident from their lives, knew the value of ejac-

ulatory prayers. Some of the saints, in truth most of them, never did very wonderful things during their years on earth, but they did common things wonderfully well by the aid of ejaculatory prayers. St. Zita was a cook, St. Benedict Joseph Labre a beggar, and St. Aloysius a young Jesuit novice. Yet they scaled the heights of sanctity by the ladder of ejaculations. Their example is a sermon to us.

When involuntary distractions come shrieking into our ears, and picking at our eyes, we will pray on. God knows the efforts we are making, and He knows we are but dust and ashes. We are the work of His hands. He understands us better than we understand ourselves. We will, therefore, be patient when He denies us what we ask, for His ways are not our ways, and He knows what is best for us all. Sweet, consoling thought! God understands us, and knows all things! How few of our dearest friends "Know half the reason why we smile or sigh!" (Keble.) How many of our bitterest struggles are never known to men, even to those nearest and most beloved! How many of our moral battles, our temptations, our good deeds are, as George Eliot says:

> *"—gathered like a scroll within the tomb*
> *Unread forever"*

by our friends. But God knows, and does not forget. We are safe in letting our deeds be everywhere forgotten since they are treasured in the bosom of God.

8. Our Exodus

LIFE, "this mere dot of existence," is rapidly passing away. Like the spray dropping from the rower's oar, or the bright, transient ripple which his boat leaves behind; like the tiny snowflake falling on the river,

"A moment white, then melts forever;"

like the shadow of the cloud which for a second is mirrored on the lake's calm bosom; like the echo which dies almost in the moment of its birth; like the bubble on the brook, like the silver dew on the morning mountain vanishing before the mighty sun—swift as the eagle flying to his prey, is life passing from you and me.

Nigher and still more nigh comes the hour "when soul must part from self, and be but soul," when death shall claim his own. The world is a great, wide slate, on which time has marked ever so faintly numerous tiny points. Those little specks are human lives, and grim death is rapidly and with fell sweep momentarily wiping away life after life—sometimes hundreds of lives at once. How close he may be now, that dread eraser, to you or to me!

Death is waiting patiently for us all. You see that lovely girl blossoming into womanhood. There is a tiny worm in that sweet bud—the worm of death, which will consume the flower.

Look at that sturdy athlete, the man of iron, towering, like Saul, head and shoulders over his fellow-men. There is a worm at the root of that cedar of Libanus, the fatal worm of dissolution, and ere long that tree will fall, either "to the south, or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be." That powerful man will soon lie in his quiet grave, only one of the ten hundred times ten thousand graves throughout the world. The voice of praise shall have gone into silence with him; and now the raindrops of tearful spring, or the red and golden leaves of autumn are falling gently upon that silent mound; or the bright summer sun is bringing forth perfume and color from the flowers that grow thereon, or the flossy snow is covering with immaculate beauty the hard, frozen clay about his tombstone.

Look into the grave. That muscular hand, that could rend asunder iron chains, is now bound fast and hard by a pale, tiny, creeping vine. Those feet that had the speed of Mercury, "that mocked at time," are now beslimed by the slow worm. That heart, in whose bright vocabulary there was no such word as fear; that heart whose chords vibrated not to the pipe of peace, but responded to the trumpet of war—in that valiant heart dwells the trembling, cowardly worm.

Life is a tragedy; it always ends in death. We are but poor players, upon whom the final curtain will soon fall, never to rise again. The

hour is drawing near when our physician will shake his head hopelessly, and say to the priest, if we are so fortunate as to have a priest by us: "Take my patient, O priest of God! There is nothing more to be done by me. The patient belongs to you; he is dying." And then the anointed minister of God, the ambassador of Christ, soothes the deathbed with the deathless touches of religion, religion, which is all the world leaves us at the end. Oh, how worse than useless will all the earth and its vanities appear by the light of the blessed candle which, like a star of hope, burns encouragingly by our dying bed!

There is nothing more certain than death. We must all return to the bosom of old mother earth, the bosom from which we came. There is no escape. Back to the womb that bore us; ashes to ashes, dust to dust. The day will come when you and I shall die the death, only to be born again, born into eternity, born into the world that hath no death, as this world hath. Though we live to attain the years of Methusala, we shall see our dying day.

Only two men did not die, Henoch and Elias. Henoch "walked with God, and was seen no more, because God took him," took that saintly son of Adam out of this world, so that Henoch did not see death. And Elias, the intrepid prophet, the dauntless foe of Jezebel, the wicked queen of Israel—Elias was taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot and in a whirlwind. But both those saints will return at the end of the world to

fight with Antichrist, to be slain by him, and to rise again after the third day. So that no son of Adam shall escape the common fate.

But though there is nothing so certain as our death, nothing is more uncertain than the time of our death. "You know not the day nor the hour." Perhaps we shall die in the morning, when the glorious sun, the king of day, is rejoicing in the east, and shedding his splendor on the world. Perhaps when the sun has reached the meridian, our hearts, though strong and brave, may be attacked by a sharp, shooting pain, and fail. Perhaps when evening is drawing on, with her gray, misty veil, our life may set with the sun of day, and our breath go out with the dying scent of the sleepy flowers. Be it at sunrise or sunset, the hour is coming on swiftly, every tick of the clock bringing it nearer, when our poor worn and weary hearts, that all along, like muffled drums, have been beating funeral marches to the grave, shall falter—go on for a second—falter again, and stop forever. "The hour of death," says St. Gregory, "God has left uncertain, that we may be always apprehensive of death, and may never cease to prepare for that crisis."

We fear death, and reasonably so. Yet St. Gregory comforts us with these words: "To fear death before it comes is to conquer death when it comes." Because it is not death we dread so much, as the judgment of God; and the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The

powers of hell have been broken. The grave is no longer victorious. Death has lost its sting. Our Redeemer, by His resurrection, has led captivity captive, has stripped from the temples of pallid death its sombre laurels, and has taken from the grave its darkness and shadowy gloom.

But though we fear death, too many of us reflect on our own end as if it were far, far away. It is a sort of distant, unpleasant thing, very vague, very ghostly. We are like the rich man mentioned in the Gospel of St. Luke, the millionaire whose land brought forth fruit in plenty, and who thus reflected: "I will pull down my barns, and will build greater..... Soul of mine, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thy rest; eat, drink, make good cheer." And that selfsame night the worldly wise fool died. The serpent said to Eve, "Thou shalt not die," and to us self-deception whispers, "Thou shalt not die soon, the time is yet afar off." How many souls thus beguiled by Satan perish, for the devil is a liar and the father of lies! How many souls are surprised by death, a sudden and unprovided death, and go to meet the Bridegroom with lamps oilless and dead; go to the everlasting banquet, but not having on a wedding garment, go to their Judge red with the guilt of their sins! And all because those souls have presumed, abused grace, and put from their minds the thought of their death. Death may even now be threatening some of us, and our judgment may be nearer than we dream

Yet there is much consolation in death. Oh, if there were no death men would sigh to die; like caged birds, they would beat their breast against the bars of this earthly prison! Death is the end of our worldly trials and disappointments. It is rest from labor, the labor of the overworked body, the labor of the weary head, the labor of the overwrought, breaking heart. God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, "and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow." If we are but prepared,—and we can be prepared if we choose—we shall not go to our grave like the quarry slave at night, scourged to his dungeon. Instead, with an unfaltering trust in the promises of Christ, we shall prepare joyfully to depart. We have sinned and died to grace and God; but made new men, regenerated in the holy Sacrament of Penance, our soul cleansed by the absolution of the priest, we can courageously close our eyes to time and open them to eternity. Our sins are forgotten by God. When our little bark has crossed the bar, and "the Pilot of Galilee stretches over the waters a welcoming hand," He will not regard how our soul fared through the trials she has passed, or how she weathered the storms of temptation, but, in His mercy, He will consider only her state at the last. (Meredith's *Lucile.*) Our souls are very precious to God. While the grave and corruption instruct us in our nothingness as sons of Adam, the divine Victim on our altars, the Lamb slain for us, by whose wounds we are

healed, the Son of man teaches us our dignity as adopted sons of God, to whom, indeed, as co-heirs with Christ, we cry, *Abba, Father*. Is it any wonder, then, that St. Paul, reflecting on this truth, wrote: "To die is gain. I desire to be dissolved and be with Christ"?

Death terminates our power of sinning. When we gasp out our last breath, a period is put, a full stop placed to our long list of broken commandments. Sweet reflection, we can offend God no more. No sins of thought, word, or deed can evermore soil our souls. Most of the miseries of this life are caused by sin. Ever since the fatal disobedience in the Garden of Eden, on down through the ages, sin has ruined happiness and spoiled lives. The dying groans of the murdered Abel; the flight of the God-branded original murderer, Cain; the tree of death from which dangled the horrid corpse of the betrayer, Judas; the tree of life, the blood-stained Cross, on whose triumphal bosom hung the world's Ransom—all these are mute, but powerful witnesses to the ravages of sin. And our sins, your sins and mine, cease to accumulate only when our life ends. We can never again, through weakness or malice, stab at our Savior's tender, loving Heart; never again can we grieve the Holy Spirit, whose temples we are; never again can we, dust and ashes, rebel against Him who made us. Thanks be to God! There is coming an hour when sin for you and me will no longer exist.

Let us pray every day to die strengthened by the Last Sacraments—the last cleansing confession, the last inspiring, nourishing Communion, our Viaticum, the last consoling, calming anointing with the holy oil in Extreme Unction. Life without the Blessed Sacrament is death; death with the Blessed Sacrament to accompany us is life. "It is only with Jesus that we can, any of us, meet Jesus. We take Him in Viaticum, and then go to meet Him as our Judge." (Faber's *Foot of the Cross.*)

When the evening of our brief day of life is enshrouding us in its gloom, and, like the two sad-hearted disciples on the road to Emmaus, we are sore oppressed; when the faces of those near and dear to us have become like pale floating masks in the darkness, and are vanishing from our eyes, dim and failing, let us turn with burning heart to our Savior, who has triumphed over death, and whisper: "Abide with me, dear Lord. The shadows of the gloaming are round about me. It is toward evening; the day of my life is now far spent. Be with me when comes the night." And He who desires not the eternal death of the sinner will aid us, will be by our side in our hour of supremest need. The light of the world will fade from us, but we shall see Him, face to face, Him who dwells in light inaccessible—Him, the Sun of the everlasting hills, Him whose glory shall never fade, whose glory shall be our glory.

9. The Light That Shone Beyond the Synagogue

"Where is He that is born King of the Jews?"

This was the question the tired, travel-stained Magi asked of King Herod.

"We have seen His star in the east, and are come to adore Him. Our books have told us of this King, and night and day have we journeyed to find Him. We know He is the Promised One."

The learned Magi were directed to Bethlehem Ephrata, the "little one among the thousands of Juda" (Mich. 5: 2.); "and behold, the star which they had seen in the east, went before them until it came and stood over where the Child was." The Magi kings found only an Infant in the humblest of surroundings. No purple adorned the throne of this King of the Jews; there was no jeweled crown; no fine linen swathed His tiny limbs. The faith of the Magi was severely tested, but not an instant did they doubt. That helpless Babe, whom Herod later would try to slay, and for whom the Holy Innocents would be put to the sword, was God, Emmanuel, God with us, God here on earth. Those glorious baby eyes were the orbs of Him whose splendor existed before the orb of the sun was made. That slender throat with the faintly seen pulse was hot with the Blood that was to buy heaven for the Magi

themselves. Those dimpled hands, pink warm snowflakes, supported the great earth and the oceans thereof.

Under all the weak exterior, the eyes of the Three Kings, sharpened by Faith, saw the majesty of the Son of God; "and falling down they adored Him"—adored Him, their God, before whom their joy-dilated hearts were prostrated in loving humility; there the learned grayheads bowed to earth before a mute Babe.

Thus was Christ made known to the Gentiles. Epiphany means the manifestation of the Messiah to the Gentile world. Christ had come unto His own people, the Jews, and His own received Him not.

This humble advent of the prophesied Ruler did not coincide with the picture in the imagination of the Jews. They wanted a Moses who would make them triumph over their enemies. They wanted another man of blood, like King David, a warrior who would break from their limbs the chains of Roman serfdom—a second King Solomon, to whose throne would flock the potentates and powers of all other nations.

Their carnal minds could not understand that the Pharaoh who would be overthrown was the devil, the prince of darkness; that the foes that Christ would vanquish for them were the enemies of their soul; that the kingdom that would be restored to them was the heavenly kingdom of Israel, the kingdom closed by the sin of the first Adam, to be reopened only by the death of the

second Adam, who sprang from the root of Jesse in Bethlehem, the city of David. If Christ had come as a great general, another Judas Machabeus, how the Jews would have flocked to His standard! King David's power would have been as nothing to His. The love with which Napoleon's soldiers clung to him gives only a faint idea of what the Jewish adoration of Christ would have been, had He but come into the land of Judea as a conquering hero of war and bloodshed.

But Christ came not only to save the Jews. Other sheep He had which were outside the fold of the synagogue. Them also He should bring, and they should hear His voice, and there should be one fold and one Shepherd. Those other dear sheep and lambs were the Gentiles. His ways and plans were not the ways and plans of the carnal-hearted, stiff-necked, narrow-minded Jews.

There is no respect of persons with God. The lip-service of the Jews displeased Him. The Jews abided by the letter, but forgot the spirit of the law—the letter which killeth, but the spirit which quickeneth into life everlasting. They rent their garments, but not their hearts. Like Cain, they offered an unpleasing sacrifice to God who desired mercy and not their devotionless sacrifice; to the God whose most acceptable sacrifice is an afflicted spirit, and who never despises a contrite and humble heart; to the God who, weary of empty types and figures, desired to be adored in

spirit and truth. The Jews circumcised their flesh, but not their hearts. While they were blowing the trumpet in Sion, they neglected to sanctify the Lord in their hearts.

They read the Scriptures, and preserved them as a precious casket containing the jewel of truth; yet they would not receive Him whom the prophets had foretold when He came in the fullness of time. St. Augustine speaks of the Jews as servants accompanying children to school. The attendants carried the schoolbooks, but could not read them properly or understand them. The Jews possessed the Scriptures, but only the Christians interpreted them truly. On the feast of the Epiphany, Christ became a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory passed away from that benighted people, Israel.

The learned Magi found Christ and salvation through their books. They studied rather for the love of truth than that they should appear well-read and wise. Their example might well be followed to-day by many of our highbrowed, supercilious savants who are puffed up with vain and worldly learning. Better is the lowly rustic who loveth God, says Thomas à Kempis, than the proud philosopher who, neglecting his soul, considers the course of the heavens, ponders over the wonders of the stars and listens to the music of the spheres.

Alas, that men should study nature, and fail to look from nature up to nature's God! Knowledge and pride too often are twins, but they are

not inseparable. Many philosophers and theologians, like St. Thomas, have the simplicity of a child, the sanctity and self-contempt of John the Baptist, and the purity of an angel. Those are men with the hearts of angels or angels with the bodies of men.

The Magi at the feet of the Infant Christ represent us, the Gentiles. They offered gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh—gold to their king, frankincense to their God, and myrrh to the Child bearing their common humanity.

Years before, the eastern nations had pillaged Jehovah's temple at Jerusalem, and carried away the vessels of gold and silver that were consecrated to the service of the Most-High. The sacrilegious Balthasar at his profane feast with his wives and concubines drank from the gold and silver cups, and praised his false gods of wood and stone on that fatal night when the mysterious hand wrote on the wall his doom. The Magi, born of those nations that defiled the temple and its holy vessels, now offer reparation by presenting gold to the humble God-Man. We, like the Wise Men, must offer gifts to our Lord—the precious gold of alms-giving and kind acts, the fragrant incense of sincere prayer, and the bitter but agreeable myrrh of penance.

Oh, that we had faith as strong as the faith of the Magi! There were the majesty and omnipotence of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity concealed under the form of a little Babe. Here to-day on our altar the same God is

hiding in a little Host. There in Mary's arms reposed the divine Body, the almost transparent vase of the Blood which was to redeem the world. To-day in the chalice at Mass the same precious life-giving stream is present to cleanse and nourish our souls. We envy the venerable Kings the privilege of kissing the hands, perhaps even the lips, of the sweet Babe. Yet we ourselves are more to be envied, for while we cannot hold the flower-like little form to our breast, and feel the warm impress of the tiny coral mouth, we can receive our Savior into our heart in holy Communion.

The Three Kings were free from human respect. They did not return to Herod, but went back another way into their own country. They disregarded the wish of the cruel, haughty king, and gave him mortal offense, for he became exceeding angry. Had the Magi gone back to Herod's corrupt court, they knew that they would have received a reception befitting their rank; they would have been feted and entertained. But they preferred to offend the overbearing, crafty, blood-thirsty monarch, and to remain in the friendship and love of the poverty-straitened Babe.

Perhaps the wise Kings learned later how little reliance could be placed on Herod's smile and favor. Perhaps the shrieks of the heart-broken mothers of Bethlehem, mourning over their murdered children, pierced even to the far eastern homes of the Magi. Perhaps the grue-

some details of the death of the Holy Innocents reached them—of the thirsty daggers which slashed the tiny delicate throats, scarce thicker than the blades which drank their blood; of the babes flung to drown in pitying waters; of those children who were hurled and crushed upon stones, less hard than the hearts of Herod and his soldiers; of the maddened mothers who dashed themselves upon the swords of the brutal executioners in a useless effort to save their babies. Perhaps the Magi heard all these facts, and execrated Herod as we do.

We, too, have left our Herod behind us—the Herod of mortal sin, the Herod of our old ways. Now, like the Wise Men, we must not return to Herod. We have reformed our lives, have made a fresh start, and have looked on Herod's face for the last time—no more mortal sin in our lives.

We will never again retrace our steps to that place of iniquity, that saloon. Oh, yes, the lights are brilliant there, the conversation is bright and cheerful, the companions are winning and entertaining; but sin is amid that sparkle; mortal sin and death for our souls lurk in those pleasant surroundings, just as the spirits of darkness were busily engaged in Herod's palace. That person whose company has such a deadly charm for us, we will avoid him or her. Our past experiences tell us that with such a companion we almost invariably go astray and wander, like foolish sheep, from our Good Shepherd. The serpent's eye shall no longer fascinate us, but at

the first approach of the viper we will fly away.

At Christmas we celebrate the feast of the birth of Christ. At Epiphany we rejoice over His revelation to the Gentiles, His birth for us. The unhappy Jews, after centuries of waiting, lost their Messiah when, in the fullness of time, He came—came at the close of the seventy weeks of years, as Daniel the prophet foretold. Now He is ours for time and eternity, unless, like the Jews, we eject Him from our hearts. God forbid that we should ever lose our precious heritage, our Savior and His grace! Herod forced Christ to flee from Judea into pagan Egypt; and when the soul commits mortal sin, she causes her Lord to depart, and leave His former abode to the devil. Cruel Herod did not understand; he thought that the new-born King had come to take away his earthly crown. But our soul cannot plead ignorance; she knows that Christ came to bestow a heavenly kingdom, the delights of which the mind is unable to conceive.

We will heed the promptings of grace, and will follow the star of God's inspirations—on, onward through trials and discouragements, as the Magi did, until the light of grace becomes for us the light of glory, and we kneel before Mary's Son on His bright throne above.

10. Our Shibboleth

AFTER the death of Moses, the great deliverer and leader of the Israelites, from the bondage and the land of Egypt, Josue became the captain of the chosen people. It was the great office of Moses to guide the Jews from the country of the Pharaohs; but to Josue's lot fell the happy privilege of bringing the wandering, footsore children of Israel into the land of Canaan, the land of promise, the land flowing with milk and honey.

The name Josue and Jesus in Hebrew are the same. Josue means savior. That is the meaning of Jesus. It was no mere accident that our Lord, the long-expected Deliverer, was called by the name of Josue or Jesus, as the great son of Nun had been called in the misty past. The name Jesus came from heaven; for the Angel Gabriel said to the Virgin Mother that her Son's name should be Jesus.

Great was Josue the captain of the Jews, but infinitely greater was the lowly Nazarene, the Jesus of Galilee. Josue obtained for his followers temporal prosperity and abundance, and made of them a nation. Jesus bought with His life and precious blood eternal felicity, a happiness which the earthly mind of man cannot conceive. He loosed His followers not from the slavery of a Pharaoh, but from the serfdom of a mightier

than Pharaoh, the prince of darkness. He led and leads His chosen ones not from a mere desert of earth, but from a land covered with the mists and darkness of perpetual death.

The name of a captain is dear to his soldiers. It is a sort of talisman to work wonders. It can conjure up in despairing, drooping hearts flames of hope and energy. It is a shibboleth which enables a small army to wade through rivers of difficulty, and win a hard fought field. Such was Josue's name to the Jews. Such was Napoleon's magic name to his men.

Wonderful was the success of the apostles because they preached in the name of Jesus. In the name of Jesus St. Peter healed the lame man at the beautiful gate of the temple. When the prince of the apostles was arraigned before the council of the priests, and they demanded by what power he had wrought the miracles, St. Peter replied boldly: In the name of that same Jesus whom you crucified. Then the priests threatened the apostles "that they speak no more in this name to any man." But we ought to obey God rather than men. The apostles disobeyed the priests, and continued to preach. The apostles were scourged, but they went their way, "rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus."

When David, the shepherd boy, went forth to fight Goliath, the giant leader of the Philistines, he took with him not spear and shield, but only a sling and five pebbles from the brook. Yet he,

the youth untrained in war, slew the mailed warrior. So in that small but mighty name of five letters did the apostles work stupendous miracles, and confound the powers of hell. "In My name they shall cast out devils," promised our Lord; and Satan's power was broken. His kingdom of darkness was shaken to its foundation by the name of Jesus, for God has given His only begotten Son "a name which is above all names."

Oh, it is a powerful name, this name of Jesus! The devils in hell tremble at its might. The seraphs in heaven veil their pure faces with their wings when it is pronounced.

For men alone, this name seems to have no fear. Men dare to treat this name rudely in their language, the name which the angels glorify. Men forget that the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. Every idle word that men shall speak they shall render an account of in the judgment. How much stricter account shall have to be turned in before the angels of God for the many times this blessed name has been slighted and profaned! for the numberless occasions when this holy name fell trippingly from the tongues of worldlings, and even from the lips of those who call themselves servants of God!

Well could our Savior complain through the mouth of His prophet that He had become a derision unto His people, and that they scoffed at Him. Oh, that lips that have received the body

of Christ should ever give birth to curses and blasphemies which contain the holy name! Oh, that from the mouth that has taken the Food of angels, there should issue such pollution as to stifle and kill the life of grace in the soul! But God is not one who will bear mocking and railing forever. Those who honor our Lord's name He will honor, and those who despise His name shall be lightly esteemed.

And the sweetness of this holy name! There are no perfumes sweeter and stronger than the balms of Arabia. Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Lady Macbeth: "All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand." And the poet Crashaw writes of our dear Lord's name: "Sweet Name! in Thy each syllable a thousand blest Arabias dwell." Not the sweetness of a single Arabian perfume, not the sweetness of the perfumes of all Arabia, but the sweetness of a thousand Arabias. Sweet is the name of Mary, the Virgin Mother, but infinitely sweeter is the name of her divine Son. Mary is the branch, Jesus is the flower. Mary is the rod which came forth from the root of Jesse, but Jesus is the blossom that made beautiful the plant.

Men are very chary of their reputation, and of how their name is used. How quickly the flush of anger mounts to a man's cheek and the indignant flash to his eye, when he is called out of his name! How prompt must be the apology to soothe the wounded righteousness and pride!

As a rule, men are careful not to insult one another. But they are not afraid to insult God.

Does the blasphemer think that he shall escape punishment, because he heaps insults not on man, but on God? Does the blasphemer think that God's ear cannot hear—that He who made the ear of man, the wonderful organ which can contain the thunder's awful roar or the mad dash of the sea; the ear which can catch the very sighing of the breeze in the pines or the soft breathing of the infant—does man dream that God, who fashioned the human ear, cannot hear the loud blasphemy or the muttered curse? Because the mills of God grind slowly, many a blasphemer goes his way fearlessly. He has sinned, and he is none the worse. But though the mills of God grind so slowly, they grind exceeding small, and God's just wrath will overtake the blasphemer, and outraged majesty will overwhelm the sinner. Sin and its punishment grow from one root. Sin sows the seed from which shoots up punishment.

The writers of the Old Testament so dreaded blasphemy that when speaking of that sin, they used the word benediction. Job's wife, seeing her husband covered with a grievous ulcer from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head, said to him: "Bless God and die"—meaning, "Curse God and die, because He has loaded you with evils."

I wonder how many of us would allow a scoffer to profane our father's name; to speak slight-

ingly of the one who gave us life? At once we would demand atonement. Yet we stand idly by, and listen to oaths and curses and blasphemous use of the holy name, and by our nods and cowardly smile abet the sinner in his sins. Down deep in our hearts some of us are not pleased that our Savior's name should be so lightly bandied about, but we fear to express our disapproval, or to show our displeasure by a frown. It is not necessary that on the spot we should preach a sermon to the swearer. That most likely would only cause him to blaspheme the more. But, if we think a word in private would help, we might remark: 'Don't say such things; they do not become you."

A very good practice is to pray for the swearer; first, that he may lose his bad habits; and second, that our Lord's honor may be repaired by your devotion. When you hear foul words against God and His saving name, send up to the throne on high ejaculations to our offended Lord in reparation for the injury. Who knows but your prayer may be the salvation of that reckless sinner tearing along on his way to hell! Who knows but your prayer may descend as a gentle rain cloud upon that sin-parched soul, bringing the dew of grace to a dry, desert land —a land that will later bring up numberless good works for God's greater glory! We are all our brother's keeper. If he is speaking the speech of the profane, and going the way of Babylon, we ought to pray for him at Bethlehem.

When you overhear cursing or blasphemy, repeat the prayer: "Lord, forgive them, for they know not what they say."

In our moments and hours of sadness, in our bitter heart trials, the sweet name of Jesus murmured will lighten our load of misery, will take away the galling pain of our mortal yoke, and will dissipate with its sunshine the gloom and darkness. Temptations come which loom before us like impassable mountains, but we breathe in fervent prayer the name of Jesus, and the mountains are leveled with the plains. Temptation leads us into a desert land, where there is no way and no water. Our fainting soul is yielding and sinking to earth, but the miracle of the holy name is repeated. We call on Jesus, and His help comes to our weak and weary soul, like strengthening night dew to a dying flower. In our daily struggle with life, showers of sin-poisoned arrows are falling round us, sometimes dangerously close. Our companions all about are dropping in their tracks, their souls wounded to death. The holy name is protection. We must not despair with so powerful an ally.

It is refreshing to meet persons who are filled with a reverent love for the holy name—persons to whose lips instinctively at all moments of temptation or depression the holy name rises as naturally as their breath. We are creatures of habit, and thrice blessed is the man who has the habit of ejaculating the holy name. It is inspiriting to see a company of men bowing, each

and every head, like a breeze-swept harvest field, when the holy name is uttered in their hearing.

At this moment throughout the world, there is rising up to the throne of the God-Man on high where He sits, surrounded by His angels and saints, in His eternal glory—sweet incense is floating up from poor earthly censers to His feet. That golden cloud of perfume comes from lowly human hearts. In a humble cottage, a mourning mother is bending over her dying child, and whispering upon his fevered brow the holy name. Down deep in a coal pit, a horny-handed miner has stopped for a moment to wipe the perspiration from his face, lift his cap, and breathe out the name of Jesus. In a peaceful convent corridor, a meek nun is quietly going about her daily task, her eyes cast down, and her lips mute and motionless, but her heart is singing a hymn to the holy name. A priest is hurrying along a dusty road on his mission of mercy to the bed of the dying. With the rapid beating of the priest's heart, the tiny pyx and its sacramental Occupant rise and fall, and the priest's thoughts are harp-like hymns of praise to the holy name.

That golden cloud of incense going up from earth to heaven is made of prayer. Prayers of love and reparation to the holy name constitute the warp and woof of that priceless cloud. God grant that you and I have woven threads in that cloud, even though our threads should be the poorest found there! God grant that our sins

against the holy name are few or none, and that our love and tender reparation more than atone for our shortcomings in this respect!

In hours of joy, the holy name should be on our lips in thanksgiving. In hours of grief and bitter sorrow, we should sigh forth the holy name in resignation. When we are wronged or misunderstood or calumniated, we should speak the strength-giving holy name to our failing hearts. And, believe me, if during life we are constant and faithful in our appeals to the holy name, when death is drawing nigh to you and me, and our supreme moment has come; when our white lips can no longer lisp a prayer, and the world is fading away into a mist, the holy name will rise from our hearts as usual, and we shall find ourselves prostrate before our Judge with that key of heaven there before us.

11. The Eighth Sacrament

In the Holy Gospel is mentioned the incident of the infirm man who languished for thirty-eight years under his sickness. At the pool of Bethsaida miracles were wrought—as to-day miracles of healing are performed at the fountain of Lourdes. At certain times an angel descended from heaven, touched and moved the waters of Bethsaida, giving them for the nonce miraculous powers of healing; and the sufferer who went down first into the pool after the motion of the water, was made whole of whatsoever infirmity he lay under. The suffering man spoken of by St. John had lain a long time by the pool of miracles. When the curing water was troubled, there was no kind, loving hand to assist the helpless patient into the pond, and so his wasting illness lingered from year to year, till hope deferred made his heart sick.

Our gentle Lord noticed the meek, patient sufferer lying helpless within sight of his cure. The eyes of the infirm man saw others being healed, and coming forth from the cleansing waters renewed in health and strength; but like Moses viewing from the mountain top the promised Canaan, that land of milk and honey, which he was never to enter, the poor invalid realized

with a pang that he could never help himself, but must depend on his fellow-men for assistance.

Footsteps approached, nearer, nearer. The poor deserted man wondered vaguely whether or not his deliverance was nigh. Nearer the Stranger came, and bending over the prostrate form spoke, "Wilt thou be made clean?" The voice was like the master tone of a rich instrument—most strangely sweet; and the dull pulses of disease awoke, and for a moment beat with a restoring thrill. "Arise and walk," said the Stranger. In His manner, command sat throned serene. The invalid's blood coursed with delicious coolness through his veins, his dry palms grew moist, and on his brow stole the dewy softness of an infant's. He was cleansed of his sin-begotten sickness. He forgot his curse and rose and stood before his God, and then with a sob of gratitude fell down prostrate at the feet of Jesus, and worshipped Him. (Willis' *Leper.*) And it was the Sabbath that day.

Yes, it was the Sabbath indeed for the infirm man, a day of rest, a day of jubilation, a day of sunshine, after a dreary space of sickness-clouded existence. Oh, those thirty-eight years of long, dragging hours and unending days and interminable months! I am certain that one and all of us, had we been near him at the pool of Bethsaida, would have shortened his torment by assisting him to bathe in the miraculous waters, and his great happiness would have added to ours.

The sufferings of the infirm man were not so great as the agonies the souls in purgatory endure. In purgatory "one hour of suffering is sharper than a hundred years here spent in the most rigid penance." (*Imitation.*) Purgatory is a "land of bitter long delay...a terrible eighth sacrament of fire which is the home of those souls whom the seven real sacraments of earth have not been allowed to purify completely," because those souls were not perfect in their dispositions. There they are, those sufferers in purgatory, "dwelling in a mysterious region of pain and quietude, of patience and of love." They are gone from earth, and "yet are upon their road to heaven. It is a detention. not an exile" (Faber)—as hell is.

There shall not enter into the City of God anything defiled, though the stain be never so small. The slightest debt owed to God's justice must be paid. Purgatory is the prison house wherein the debtors are jailed; and "Amen, I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou pay the last farthing." God is a loving Father, but He is a just Judge too, and He must —His justice demands that He punish even His own beloved children. Accordingly, the holy souls are the victims of His justice and their own sins. They are slowly effacing their soul stains by their pains—the pain of loss, the separation from God, their last end, whom they desire with unspeakable groanings, and the sharp pain of sense which, though bitter and exceeding

grievous, is less hard to bear than the pain of loss. We have some idea of the pain of sense, the sharp, shooting agony, but we cannot understand the pain of separation from God, the soul-torturing desire of beatitude, the longing for the full enjoyment of the beatific vision.

Like the man by the pool of Bethsaida, the holy souls cannot help themselves, they are dependent on our charity. They are beyond the time of meriting for themselves. If we fail them, then we neglect our brethren; and the day may come when you and I shall be in the purging fires, crying out too, but in vain: "Have pity on me, at least you, my friends, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me." We ought to copy from our Savior; just as He came to the aid of the infirm man, so should you and I, we of the Church militant, assist those members of the Church suffering. The soul that prays for the Church suffering is performing a Christ-like action of mercy. For us by our prayers and good works to obtain the early release of a soul from purgatory, is an action most acceptable to God, an action which will not go without its reward. If He has promised to recompense the soul that gives even a glass of cold water in His name to one tormented by thirst, what will He not do for the man whose merits deliver to heaven a suffering soul who will praise God for all eternity?

Perhaps justice demands that you and I intercede for the speedy delivery of certain holy souls. That loving father who toiled away for

us the best years of his precious life; that gentle mother who spent sleepless nights to soothe and sustain us in our childish illnesses—who knows but those dear dead and gone and forgotten parents are looking reproachfully from purgatory towards the children they cherished?

Oh, yes, we have placed over those hallowed graves magnificent tombstones for all the world to see, but what care the dead for this pomp? Go in ten years to the cemetery, God's acre, wherein vanity should have no place; and you will find that the ivy and lichens, those foes of immortal monuments, have shrouded up the names on the headstones, or perhaps the fierce, jealous wind has dashed down and humbled in the dust the haughty marble which heralded the names of the peaceful dead. And even at that late day those souls, near and dear to us, may be suffering in purgatory.

In Novembers past and gone, when I was a little boy, if the cold wind sobbed and moaned about the windows at night, as it does in wintry months, I thought the voices of the souls in purgatory were calling for assistance, and I feared to look at the windows, lest I should see their faces pressed against the frosted panes, their great mournful eyes begging for my prayers. If the holy souls could become visible, and gaze through our windows, I fear me there would be many a reproaching glance shot at us from those patient, meek orbs.

We find nothing sweeter than our memories of the dead. Our grief for the departed is the one only sorrow we are loath to part with. When we look back over the spent years, and recall the days and friends and relatives that are no more, tears tranquilly distill, and, as the poet says, "the dead live again in hearts that love is filling." With those twilight thoughts of the dead, we should join prayers, that the time of recollection may not pass without fruit for us and the holy souls.

Nor should we forget to pray for the poor neglected souls. Perhaps we have no immediate dear dead of our own. Perhaps some brother or sister of ours who wandered away from us in the long ago, and whom we fancy still alive —perhaps the bones of that prodigal are whitening on some lonely prairie; and our prayers, when offered up for the suffering souls, will benefit that needy soul, oh, so dear to us.

There are two chapels preceding the great grand cathedral of heaven; the Church militant comes first; from it we pass into the Church suffering, and thence to the Church triumphant. The communion of saints unites the cathedral to those two chapels, and the inhabitants of all three are, or should be, united by the common bond of constant, mutual charity. The Church militant can pray and offer sacrifice, and help the Church suffering, and the Church suffering, though it cannot merit for itself, can pray and obtain favors for the Church militant, that has

so many battles, and needs such numerous helps.

There is more consolation in praying for the dead than for the living. Our prayers will assist the dead, if said properly, but may not help the living, who are of bad will, and refuse to hearken to the promptings of grace. And moreover, the living can help themselves, whereas the dead cannot; so that it is a greater work of mercy to pray for the dead than for the living, though there is no reason why we should not pray for both.

Besides, the holy souls will assist us with their prayers for the living, and will aid us in our search after our dear stray sheep, even though those sheep have gone far from the fold, and are feeding on the dry, dusty husks of swine, they who formerly were nourished and refreshed by the green pastures and peaceful waters round about the paths of righteousness.

The most valiant Judas Machabeus, after a battle, prayed for the souls of the slain, and making a collection, "he sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead." That sacrifice was the sacrifice of the imperfect synagogue which has given way before the Church of Christ and her mighty Sacrifice of the Mass. Like the great leader of the Machabees, we should have Mass offered up that the suffering souls, those favorites of our Lord, may near the harbor of their eternal rest.

And when the momentous day has come for us, the day which leads us from the chapel of the Church militant into the chapel of the Church suffering, and you and I are looking with love-dilated, longing eyes from our cleansing flames to the closed door of pearl and gold of that mighty cathedral; when Jesus unseen, is gazing at us, His lingering spouses and elect, in our prison of refining fire, while His Heart thirsts again with His Calvary thirst of souls, the mercy we have shown the souls in purgatory will have gone to God's throne before us, and there, like an angel trumpet-tongued, will plead our cause.

Our merciful prayers for the dead, and our still more merciful offering of the Holy Sacrifice for their relief, will not go unrewarded. St. Paul's words are consoling: "God is not unjust that He should forget your work and the love you have shown in His name, you who have ministered...to the saints." The Lord of Hosts who said: "I desired mercy," and: "Show ye mercy and compassion, every man to his brother," will give His angels charge, and they will wing their way hastily to purgatory. And in the midnight of our sufferings, long before we expected the eternal dawn of our glory, the joyful gates of our prison cell will fling prematurely open, and a happy deliverance will be ours: "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye forth to meet Him."

12. The Chalice of the Precious Blood

The devotions in the Church are varied and manifold. The Church, loving mother that she is, never wearies of bringing old truths in new ways before her children. The human heart and mind are fickle. They need novelty, and the Church supplies that novelty, so far as she may, and so far as is good for us. The Jansenists objected to the devotion of the Sacred Heart, because of its newness, forgetting that the lance-pierced Heart of Christ, united to His divinity, was honored from the first ages of the Church, though only in later centuries, in the fulness of time, did this popular devotion spread as we have it.

We love and adore the human Sacred Heart of Our Lord, because of the hypostatic union; that is, because that Heart beat in the bosom of the God-Man. True, the Sacred Heart did not redeem the world. Redemption was the work of the precious blood. But at that fearful sacrifice on Good Friday, that Mass on Calvary the human Heart of the Savior was the chalice of the precious blood. From the Sacred Heart streamed the red flood which was to wash sin-tainted souls, and make them white as snow. The Sacred Heart was the worthy home of the precious blood,

the cherubim-guarded ark, which contained the holy tide against the day of atonement.

The Sacred Heart was the fountain-head which kept the divine-human blood pure, and sent that rich stream of life tingling into the sacred feet which were always on missions of mercy bent, and into the healing hands ever extended to soothe and cure. The Sacred Heart, like a golden casket, jealously retained and protected the remaining drops of the world-ransoming blood, when the agony on the cross was nigh to its end.

And when suffering had spent itself, when the kingly eyes had cast a last look toward His heavenly throne, and His priestly blood had ceased to fall toward earth, the centurion's spear pierced the Sacred Heart, and there prepared for a shipwrecked race a harbor, like Noah's ark of old, from the deluge of sin and hell. From the Sacred Heart flowed forth the blood, and then miraculously the water which figured the cleansing of our souls by that blood. We were shut out of the heavenly holy of holies until the veil of the Sacred Heart was rent asunder by its sufferings for us. That Heart now, with the mark of its wound, is a golden sun shedding brightness in the City of God, and myriads of angels and redeemed souls are adoring that wound which the cold-hearted Roman soldier inflicted.

The symbolic Heart of Christ is adored—the great Heart, that symbol of His great love, the

love that prompted Him to become "the One Victim for us all, the Sole Satisfaction, the real Penitent, all but the real sinner." (Newman.) That love led Him at midnight's holy hour to the garden, where the oppressive vision of our sins and crimes lay heavy on His tortured Heart. All sins were there from the foundation of the world—"Of the living and of the dead, and of the as yet unborn, of the lost and of the saved, of Thy people and of strangers, of sinners and of saints—all sins are there, O my Savior—the lusts of the five cities and the obduracy of Egypt, and the ambition of Babel and the unthankfulness of Israel" (Newman), and my sins, too, dear Lord! Love crucified Christ's Heart in the garden as, on the day following, love crucified His body on the cross.

Look at the display of love in the moonlight of Gethsemane. Measure that love by the road to Calvary, a road such as conqueror never before trod. Love surrendered the unresisting Lamb into the power of the cruel wolves. Love subjected the God of purity to the shame of being stripped before a lewd soldiery, and then love clothed Him in the scarlet veil of His own precious blood. Love prepared His death-bed, the bleeding cross. Love sustained Him through His tortures till the hour of three, the most valuable hour of that day of agony, and then love drew His head down on her bosom—and Jesus died!

Knowledge of the Sacred Heart, which knowledge we acquire from meditating and pondering on Our Lord's divine excellence, begets in us a greater devotion to that Heart. Knowledge is the mother of love. How can we love what we do not know? The New Testament is the textbook from which we must learn our lessons of the Sacred Heart. Our school is the church or chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is preserved; our student's taper, the sanctuary lamp. From His gifts we can learn of the Giver. He is the crowning Gift. There He is, the vast Creator Who made the world from nothing, reposing in a little tabernacle made by hands, as in the dear long ago, He lay an Infant on Joseph's knee, or in the hollow of Mary's arm. Without Him, we are poor, poorer than Lazarus; with Him, we are rich, richer than Dives, though in giving Himself He should take from us everything else. (Cowper.)

Adoration is made easy for us when we consider our Lord's Sacred Heart. The supreme worship, or "latria," is due to every member of Christ's body, for He was and He is the God-Man, and the heart is one of the most noble organs. It is called the seat of love. He who commanded that we should love the Lord, our God, with our whole heart, loved us even then, when we were hidden in the womb of time, loved us with every fibre of that sinless Heart.

Knowledge and adoration of the Sacred Heart are twin flowers growing on a common stem.

They are the holiest of the holy things occupying the sanctuary of our heart. God grant that the transcending love of the Sacred Heart for us may be no wasted gift! While our burdened hands are laid to life's hard labor, our hearts shall remain intent on the Sacred Heart. "So great is God's condescension to our weakness," says Fenelon, "that He permits us to divide, when necessary, the time of prayer between Him and creatures." "Labor is a pure and a noble thing. It is the salt of life, it is the girdle of manliness. It saves the body from effeminate languor, and the soul from polluting thoughts" (Farrar), and with labor we will join our prayers to the Sacred Heart.

Love begets love. The amiability of the Sacred Heart cannot fail to win our homage. To look upon the heart that has loved men so tenderly is to love that Heart. A Heart burning with benignity toward men, a Heart whose chief characteristic is its divine unselfishness, ought not to appeal to us in vain. The Sacred Heart was so tender and forgiving that it wept over Jerusalem, the Jezebel city, which had slain the prophets, and in return was to be destroyed herself. Let us hope that the same dear Heart will not have occasion to sigh over the ruin and loss of our immortal soul.

The Jews drove out from the Temple of the Lord the very Lord of the Temple, Him whose one great Sacrifice was to supplant the frequent sacrifice of the Aaronic priesthood, Him who

"offered Himself unspotted unto God." We drive Our Lord from our heart by our sins, drive out the Savior who lived and died for us. Ignorance partly excuses the Jews, but we are sinning against the light. The Jews used stones, we use mortal sin. Our hearts should be veritable temples of God, houses of holy prayer. Have we made them the den of thieves, the abiding-place of demons who will bear away our soul to hell? We ought to drive from our hearts with the scourge of God's holy love the profane and polluting spirits that traffic there.

Love is not satisfied with simply folding its hands and wishing well to the beloved object. Love is active. When love sees its beloved injured, wronged, or grieved, it flies to repair the injury, to soothe the sting, and to draw the offending thorn from the wound. So acts the faithful soul towards the Sacred Heart.

Daily, nay hourly, is the Sacred Heart pained by the cold neglect and forgetfulness of men; by the indifference of those who have put themselves beyond the reach of His love, by the ingratitude of those upon whom He has bestowed His favors, by the insults and blasphemy, sacrilege and desecration of those who hate Him and His friends. Alas! we see the deep wound in the Sacred Heart, the wound His love has sustained. Justice demands that we make reparation for the wrongs we ourselves have done the Sacred Heart. Love of our Lord, love of our thoughtless, unheeding neighbor, ought to goad us on to atone

to the Sacred Heart for the slights of our fellow-Catholics.

Nothing is wanting on the part of God. What is there that He could do for the vineyard of His Church that He has not done? We must not disappoint Him in our fruits. If others fail Him, our increased love and adoration and reparation should make amends.

In our sorrows, when care follows close upon our steps, or walks by our side, shutting out from us the sun of happiness, the thought that the Sacred Heart loves us so much will console and aid us. The thought of the Sacred Heart is a golden thread woven in beautiful pattern through the warp and woof of our most sombre day. The love the Sacred Heart bears us disarms our too great fear, when we see the divine hand about to smite us, for we know that hand is guided by the Sacred Heart. When the searching, trying fires of experience are tending to anneal our heart, the thought of the Sacred Heart will keep us from growing hard. We shall be sure that grief is the impress the Sacred Heart leaves upon our soul; and we know that in the end, when our warfare is over, and our dreams are no longer haunted by visions of fighting-fields, the loving Sacred Heart will erase the scars of our falls and disappointments.

We should all be members of the Apostleship of Prayer, that great League whose efforts are directed to repairing the injuries done the Sacred Heart. Every morning should find us on

our knees consecrating to the Sacred Heart all our thoughts, words, and actions of the day that is beginning. In union is strength. The Apostleship of Prayer links our works to the numerous merits of our fellow-associates. "Where two or three are gathered together," says our Savior, "there am I in the midst of them." Nor should we let pass the first Friday of every month without joining our fervent Mass and Communion and Benediction to those of the other members of the League.

St. John, the beloved disciple, is called the Apostle of the Sacred Heart, because at the Last Supper on the eve of our Lord's death, St. John's head rested on his Master's breast, and the throbs of the grieving Sacred Heart made gentle music in his ears. St. John's claim upon the Sacred Heart was a strong one, and that claim merited for the virgin disciple the care and custody of the Blessed Virgin after her Son's death on the morrow. Our devotion to the Sacred Heart will confer on us the dignity of other St. Johns, and will help us to go bravely to meet our dying hour, while hearts all around us are failing with terror in that great crisis. When we receive Holy Communion for the last time at our Last Supper, the Viaticum, we shall feel ourselves slipping from earth into the arms and bosom of our Lord, there to lie on His Sacred Heart till our merciful judgment is over, and then to sing His praises forever with the other saints in the land of the Sacred Heart.

13. Our Crisis

SOMEWHERE in the world at this hour a criminal is pacing to and fro, waiting for the decision which will mean life or death to him.

He is guilty, but he is hoping against hope that the sentence will be a merciful one, more merciful than just. He slew a fellow man, and justice demands life for life. Every sound causes the murderer to start and shudder, for that sound, that trample of feet, may mean that the jury is coming to give its verdict, that slight cough may signify that the spokesman is clearing his throat to say "Guilty!" or "Not Guilty!" The trial was a severe strain on the prisoner, listening hopefully in the dock, while his counsel for the defense pleaded, and listening with despairing ears when the opposing lawyer cried out eloquently for justice. "He hath taken away a life; let him give a life in return. His hands are red with his brother's blood; let him wash those ruddy fingers in his own blood."

The trial was maddening, but this suspense is even worse. The hours—they seem hours, though they are only minutes—drag slowly onward; and at last the weak and wasted criminal staggers into the court to hear his fate.

There will come a moment like that in the life of every one of us, only our sentence will

mean far more to us than the judicial sentence means to the unlucky murderer. His sentence regards time; ours looks to eternity. The effects of his sentence die for him when his breathless body swings on the scaffold; the consequences of our sentence ring on through the endless ages of eternity.

Cain, "that elder brother, was not the first to shed fraternal blood; Adam had already shed the Blood of his Elder Brother who should also be his Son." Long before Cain and Abel were born, Adam had slain the Son of God by his sin. Adam was the first murderer. His disobedience made it necessary for Christ to redeem the sin-lost world; his pride sold the world and his descendants to the powers of darkness; his crime led the Prophet of Galilee, cross-laden, to the dreary, blasted, weird plateau of Golgotha. And we are worthy children of Adam—like father, like sons; by our sins we have crucified again to ourselves the Son of God and made Him a mockery. And now, like the murderer, we must receive our sentence.

We are now gazing in rapt awe upon the unveiled face of God. We have passed through the lone, shadow-haunted valley of death, leaving far behind us the world and its trials. We closed the book of our life, and have opened our apocalypse, our book of revelations. Perhaps our lives were long, our years on earth very many. Every second of those days gone forever, was but preparation for this brief second of judgment—a

long tedious rehearsal for one moment's appearance on the stage of life's great tragedy.

While we were wandering on earth, the thought that we should one day see God made us dizzy; the reflection had been overwhelming. Now we see Him. Well for us that we are immortal when our judgment comes, else the faintest flash of our Judge's splendor would rend asunder body and soul. Our Judge pronounces sentence, and we listen quietly. We do not argue. Here the arguments of Aristotle would be of no avail, says St. Jerome. We have no one to plead for us; every soul must answer for herself. "Empires cast no shadows over the population of the courts above, neither do nationalities erect partitions here," says Father Faber. We must stand or fall by our own merits. Politicians can use no subterfuges at the judgment, cannot mince matters there; the double tongue is silent. The loud-mouthed philosopher has no word to say, standing before this severe Judge from whom nothing is hidden, no deceit, no treachery; "who takes no bribes, nor receives excuses, but will judge that which is just."

It is only the innocent of heart that are bold, and those who have washed their once soiled hearts in the laver of penance and good works.

The meek widow who used to tremble with fear at the frown of her overbearing landlord, when she dropped into his capacious hand the insufficient mite to pay her rent, how fearless

she is before the great white throne; and how crest-fallen and poor and abject and barren of good works will be the moneyed landlord when he comes here!

"For then shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted and oppressed them. Then will he stand to judge who now humbly submits himself to the judgment of men. Then the poor and humble shall have great confidence, and the proud shall fear exceedingly. Then will it appear that he was wise in this world who learned for Christ's sake to be a fool and despised." (Imitation.)

What shall our sentence be, your sentence, my sentence?

That sentence decides our eternity; whether it shall be an eternity of "hopeless, all-engulfing night, or beatific day." (Dream of Gerontius.) Christ has looked at our soul, as long ago He gazed at the coin offered Him by the hypocritical, fawning Pharisees, and He asks now as He did then, "Whose image and inscription is this? Does this soul have on it the stamp of divine grace? Is this soul a fruitful field bearing in it the seed of life which will blossom unto all eternity? Or is this soul branded with the seal of my worst foe?"

"The earth that drinketh in the rain which cometh often upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is tilled, receiveth blessings from God. But that which bringeth forth thorns and briers is reprobate, and very

near unto a curse, whose end is to be burnt." By our fruits we shall be known; our works done in our days of nature shall decide whether we shall be reputed with the wicked, and with them go into everlasting punishment, or with the just enter into life everlasting.

Our judgment is the prelude to our eternity, the keynote of all our future. The thought must give us pause, that every action, aye, every idle word which we have spoken, shall be scrutinized. There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, nor hidden that shall not be known.

Oh, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! Shall we cry out: "Too late have I known Thee; too late have I loved Thee"? Shall we hear the fearful words, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire;" depart to the hell which you have merited by your sins? It is a fearful possibility that that soul-searing command may be addressed to us. What a triumph it would be for the demons, our arch enemies, to obtain possession of our souls! Their shouts of fiendish glee would resound through the dark crypts and corridors of hell:

"See, we bring into our midst a soul that was illuminated by the sacrament of Baptism, renewed, born again in the waters of life; who tasted also the heavenly gift, the Bread of angels, the Manna of the tabernacle, and who was made partaker of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of Confirmation. Lo! this shattered, irreparably ruined temple of the Holy Ghost, we drag into our midst

for all eternity! We could not get Christ; He did not sin; but we have you for whom He bled. Christ was tempted, but He conquered us. You were tempted, and we conquered you."

And thus the hideous railings will continue forever.

> "The stars shall fade away, the sun himself
> Grow dim with age, and nature sink in years;
> But thou shalt flourish in immortal youth
> Unhurt amidst the war of elements,
> The wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds,"
>
> (Addison's *Cato.*)

—thou, O lost, unhappy soul, shalt never die to thy misery!

But, please God! our fate shall not be such. To you I say, as St. Paul said to his dear convert Hebrews: "But, my dearly beloved, we trust better things of you, and nearer to salvation, though we speak thus. For God is not unjust, that he should forget your work, and the love which you have shown in His name." God grant our position will be on his right hand, with the sheep that will ever dwell in the heavenly fold, in that place of eternal pasture to which the paths of justice lead! Though we walk now in the midst of the shadow of death, we shall fear no evils, for our good Shepherd is with us. The Lord is our Shepherd, and His mercy will follow us all the days of our life, that we may dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Now is the acceptable time, now is the day for us to prepare ourselves for the judgment which must come, whether we wish it or not. "At present thy labor is profitable," says the Imitation, "thy tears are acceptable; thy sighs will be heard; thy sorrow is satisfactory. and may purge away thy sins."

The only thing we need fear at the judgment is our sins. If we wish to rejoice when the evening of our life comes, we must spend our days profitably, and verify in our conduct the great truth that all labor, every action, is wasted but that which is done for God alone. Time once lost can never be recalled. The fires of faith, hope, and charity must heat our works, and melt away the icy touches left on our hearts by the world, the flesh, and the devil. The thought of death, judgment, eternity, will be a stay for us when we get weary in the battle of life, and feel like casting off our armor and surrendering.

Death, judgment, eternity! O "eternity, thou pleasing, dreadful thought!" The long hours of the night to the sick man, or to the silent watcher by the bed of death, those hours so endless, give a faint idea of what an eternity of woe must be. The days of joy and happiness and pleasure, those days so brief, that fly away so quickly on wings of sunshine, trace out for us a kind of outline of what a blessed eternity will be.

And God grant that, when faith and hope have reached their goal, and are sinking away

into ashes, from their dying embers may be lighted up in our souls, your soul and mine, the eternal flame of charity, the charity which will keep us ever abiding in God, and God in us.

14. Virtue's Foundation Stone

THE world at large is a harsh, unkind old world, severe in judging, cruel in reprehending. It spurns the beggar, turns away from the afflicted, and has no ear for the tale of sorrow. And all this because the world is a proud old world, and is consistent in its pride. The devil is the father of pride, just as he is the father of lies, and the devil's power is felt throughout the length and breadth of the world. By the fruit the tree is known. Pride goeth before destruction, and the world's overwhelming, intolerant pride is a sure and certain sign that the world shall be destroyed. God ever maketh the roots of proud nations to wither.

"To pride is opposed humility, the virtue which occupies the mean between the two extremes of pride and pusillanimity, or mean-spiritedness. The mean-spirited man refuses to take the place for which his talents fit him, and which God intends for him. He puts himself beneath his equals and inferiors to the detriment of his dignity and office; he is afraid to exercise the authority intrusted to him, and the public good suffers in consequence. Humility, on the other hand, keeps a man in his place both with respect to God and his fellow-men. It is grounded on the knowledge of God and of self. The humble man

knows and acknowledges that he has nothing but what he has received from God, that he is utterly and entirely dependent on God every moment of his life, that if left to himself he will fall into the lowest depths of sin and degradation; and this knowledge causes him to think much of God and little, very little of self. This is the virtue so much recommended by our Divine Lord, 'Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart.'" (Slater's *Moral.*)

Pride and humility are bitter foes, and every one of us is a battlefield whereon pride and humility contest for the mastery. It was pride that made Eve stretch forth her hand to take the forbidden fruit, for the serpent had promised that, if she ate of the apple, she would be as God, knowing good and evil. The deadly viper of pride came into the garden, saw the happiness of our first parents, and conquered our mother. Eve came to the tree, saw the fruit, and tasting it, fell. "The beautiful paradise is overcast with shades. The rivers brawl more hoarsely in their beds. There are sounds of tempests among the mountains. The quiet beasts are seized with a panic which they do not comprehend." (Faber, *Precious Blood.*)

Pride wrought a dire revolution in the garden of delights. Pride was the root of Eve's action, just as it was of Lucifer's fall before her day; and too many of our own actions spring from pride, for we are worthy sons of Eve. Pride is in every one of us to a greater or less degree. Pride led

Luther from the Church of God, and caused his heresy to rend the seamless robe of Christ, the visible Church. Pride it was that buried Luther in an apostate's grave. Pride incited Napoleon to redden his hands unnecessarily with blood, to put from him his wife, the unhappy Josephine, to offer indignities to the Pope and Cardinals of Christ's Church. Pride it was that chained the Corsican Eagle to the isle of St. Helena.

It is often objected that humility is an exotic that blooms only in the contemplative cloister, but has no place in the active world; that were public officials humble, they could not do their duty, could not exercise their power. But such an objection is futile; for "the really humble can rule, and can rule with firmness and success if unaggressive. There is a world of difference between power and the pride of power. It is the sheathed strength that underlies all real humility which we worship..... *The humble* can be imperative without being aggressive. They can guide without hurting. They can stretch forth the shepherd's crook, and lead into line the vagrant and self-willed without plucking one wisp of wool or forcing one pitiful bleat." (Sheehan, *Cedars and Stars.*)

Humility has never hurt the public good. The public weal receives its wounds from unscrupulous, overweening ambition, ambition that would ride to power over the corpse of a father, ambition whose chariot wheels are dusty with bribery,

and glued with the blood of wronged citizens. Such public wrongs spring from the unholy union of pride and lust of power, from the lack of humility. The man who would be a good commander should have learned to obey. The obedient man shall speak of victory when he commands. The obedient foot-soldier makes a good general. Obedience flowers from the root of humility. Humility makes a man lowly in his own eyes and, in inverse proportion, raises his neighbor. The millennium of public life will come when all public officers are humble. Humility "lies in the voluntary sacrifice of the individual for the sake of the community, in the sacrifice of the class for the welfare of a nation, in the sacrifice of the nation for the benefit of a race, in the sacrifice of a race for the welfare of mankind." (Sheehan ibid.) Such humility can never be classed with mean-spiritedness.

Humility teaches us our place in creation. We are not demigods, not angels, only poor fallen men, brands snatched by God's mercy from the burning; lowly creatures tortured by "the concupiscence of the eyes and pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world." Humility is self-knowledge. Father Faber said there was no piety of which he knew so little good as of his own. Humility opens our eyes, and we realize our insignificance, that we are but

"A bubble on the bosom of the sea,
Itself a bubble in the bound of space."—(Tabb.)

Humility will not permit us to judge our neighbor rashly. Judgment is the Lord's, saith Humility. We look to the beam in our own eye, and regard not the mote in our brother's. "The best of us are but poor wretches just saved from the shipwreck. Can we feel anything but awe and pity when we see a fellow-passenger swallowed by the waves?" (*Janet's Repentance:* Eliot.)

Humility sets us right with God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and humility is the safest grace of that holy fear. The humble man is at peace with himself, with his neighbor, and with God. The humble man "is in the world, like a child who claims no rights, and questions not the rights of God, but simply loves and expands in the sunshine round about him;" such child-like simplicity is an earnest of our salvation. "The sinner that profoundly humbles himself becomes a just man. On the contrary, a man of angelic innocence and adorned with the rarest virtues to the most eminent degree becomes like a reprobate if he has not humility, because all the virtues he possesses want their foundation, and cannot stand." (St. Vincent de Paul.)

The life of our Redeemer and His blessed Mother are the strongest examples of humility. Humility placed a reed sceptre in the hand of the Messiah-King, yet that sceptre became more powerful than the mighty sceptre of Herod; for that reed sceptre took from death, the king of terrors,

his undisputed kingdom, while Herod's sceptre is now only a name and a synonym for cruelty and blood-thirst. Not with iron, but with wood, not with the sword, but with the cross, did Christ win His victory.

The humility of the Blessed Virgin wraps a veil of obscurity about her life. She was hidden in the moments of the worldly triumph of her Son. When the Jews would have taken Our Lord and made Him king, Mary was not there. When He was transfigured on the mountain, with His face shining like the sun, and His garments white as snow, and the ravished apostles cried out, "Lord, it is good for us to be here!" Mary's sweet voice was unheard. She was not there. When He entered Jerusalem in triumph, the multitude spreading their mantles in the way, and shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Mary's blue mantle was absent from the crowd. She was not there. When the Sun of the world was shining before men, His Mother, sweet Star of the sea, was clouded in obscurity.

Only when the darkness of Calvary eclipsed the glories of that Light Eternal, that Light which the furious Jews were extinguishing because its splendor hurt their carnal, sinful eyes, only then did the modest beams of Mary's presence shine forth. She had not heard the Hosannas, but she did hear, "Crucify Him!" On Palm Sunday, she was missing, but Good Friday found her by the cross whose every nail ran red. She had not

seen the palms vying in varied beauty, but her eyes saw every spear of the crown of ruddy thorns. When Judas betrayed, and Peter denied, and even the Father forsook His Son, Mary's encouraging presence was by the cross. When the bitter waters had rushed in all darkling upon the struggling Human Soul on the cross, that sweet Star was shedding her calm light over the troubled sea, trembling with agony as she shone, but only the brighter for that very trembling.

The humility of the Son and of the Mother is beautiful; and we, in our poor way, should try to imitate them, far off from their perfection, of course. Since we have not the strength of the saints, and cannot pray for humiliations to come upon us, we shall try to bear them with an equal mind and without repining when they do come, as they must and will. On the souls He loves most God pours down humiliations, every one of which He intends as a new, sparkling jewel in that soul's eternal crown. Those humiliations render the soul only the more beautiful, just as the raindrops bend down and humble the haughty head of the rose which rises after the storm only the lovelier and more glorious.

Humility will guide us to our home safely, as the angel Raphael brought the young Tobias back to the bosom of his father. Humiliations well borne will strengthen and set on fire our vile, world-frozen hearts, so that we shall be worthy to fill the thrones which angels lost through pride.

We must pray daily for humility, asking Him who was meek and humble of heart beyond all sons of earth, to make our hearts like unto His. When our humiliation is extreme, we shall reflect on Him who was made the merchandise of a traitor, and bought and sold for the price of a slave. When we are tempted to retort and make stinging reply to those who humiliate and confound us, we shall hear the "*Ecce Homo!*" of Pilate, and our tongue will be silenced by the memory of Him who stood meekly dumb and abject before the accusing Pharisees, and like the lamb before his shearers opened not His mouth. We must remember always that he who humbleth himself in time shall be exalted in eternity, that the meek shall possess the land of the eternal years.

15. Man's Greatest Foe

THE soul in mortal sin, to what shall we compare its condition? That unfortunate soul is like the worn, tired little farm-girl asleep in the burning grass field. The child, overcome by fatigue and oppressed by the heat of the day, has lain down on the dry, sunburnt grass to rest. The tall daisies and dandelions and long, slender grasses wave above her head; the gentle breeze fans her flushed cheek and stirs the tendrils of her hair. All looks peaceful—as peaceful as the reclining girl, deeply under the influence of "Tired Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep." But afar off, there is a billow of white smoke, with tongues of golden flame leaping through it, with tiny star-like sparks dancing in the air at every angry crack of a twig or doomed bush. That fire is rolling on, nearer and nearer to the slumbering little maiden. The frightened birds and startled insects are escaping by flying into the air. Their shrill chirps and piteous buzzings can be heard yards away, but the sounds reach not the ears of the sleeper sleeping in innocent sleep—the ears closed to the outside world by nature's powerful opium, fatigue.

A faint, poor picture of the soul in mortal sin!

"His own iniquities catch the wicked," saith Proverbs, "and he is fast bound with the ropes of his own sins"—bound hand and foot of his own choice, with hell fire and eternal loss dangerously near. With his own hand, that man, in committing mortal sin, has branded his soul with the stamp of hell. His soul is in darkness and gloom, all sunshine of grace gone; there is a cloud between him and God. Christ has been cast out of that heart, and there in that shattered and polluted temple of the Holy Ghost is enthroned the outcast angel, the prince of demons, the foe of God and man. God gives every soul a free will, and He does not interfere with that free will, though He assists the will with the influx of His graces.

He has given to each and every one of us the awful power of choosing between Him and our greatest enemy, between good and evil, between the state of grace and the state of mortal sin. The soul in mortal sin has made her choice. She has drawn down the curtain with her own hand, and shut out the divine sunlight. She has put Christ in one scale and Belial in the other, and she has added the weight of her own will to the side of the devil, and so hell has outweighed heaven. She has rejected grace and chosen sin; has obscured the light and is sitting in darkness; has driven out life and taken death to her bosom; has hated justice and loved iniquity; has set up her passions as an idol before the very face of God, that God who said: "I am the Lord thy

God.....Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me," whether those gods be idols of brass or idols of passion.

Mortal sin breaks off the divine friendship with us. We are now God's enemy—an enemy of the all-powerful Being who breathed into our face the breath of life, and made us a living soul; who loved us and thought of us from all eternity; who created our soul to fill the place left vacant by a fallen angel. We have turned our back on our Redeemer who poured out for us the last drop of His blood, like the fabled pelican; Him by whose bruises we are healed; Him who for our sake became despised and the most abject of men, who bore our infirmities and carried our sorrows, who became as it were a leper and as one struck by God and afflicted for us. Him we have rejected as did the Jews long ago. We have grieved the Holy Spirit. We have extinguished the fire He enkindled in our soul. We have forced Him to discontinue the work of our sanctification.

We cannot realize fully what we have done. To understand mortal sin perfectly, we should have to know God as He alone knows Himself.

> "Heaven's Sovereign saves all beings but Himself
> That hideous sight, a naked human heart,"

in the state of mortal sin. We do not see the repulsive leprosy of the soul, the corrupting cancer. If we could plunge down deep into the

depths of the heart filled with the guilt of one mortal sin, we should find it a chamber of horrors—an odious cavern, without pure air, where all is covered with choke-damp and decay and polluting mould, where vileness is cherished by all-engulfing night, and there is no gleam of beatific day.

Beware of the first sin; but when you have unfortunately fallen, do not go on adding sin to sin, thinking only of the confessional, and not of God's wounded majesty, and saying to yourself: "It is as easy to confess five sins as one." The leak in the dike was at first only a tiny hole, whence oozed a trickle of water, but the hole became wider and wider until a very flood of waters gushed forth and spread death and desolation. So with sin. It is easier to commit the second mortal sin than the first.

"He who does not feel the smart of the first wound easily receives a second and a third," says St. John Chrysostom (*On the Priesthood*); "for the wicked foe, if he finds the soul prostrate and insensible to its former wounds, never ceases to strike until our last breath." And "when the soul is wounded and falls, it does not lie senseless like the body, but thenceforth it pines away with the torture of a bad conscience in this life, and after death, it is delivered up at judgment to everlasting punishment. And if any one feels no pain from the wounds inflicted by the devil, by his insensibility to pain he suffers greater hurt."

The soul in the state of mortal sin is balancing on the brink of hell fire into which so many other souls are plunging. The soul now leans towards safety and heaven under the promptings of actual grace, and now the soul sways towards death and hell under the goadings of the flesh and the devil to commit another sin. Sin after sin draws veil after veil of spiritual darkness over the soul's eyes until comes blindness of heart.

All the while, the soul is acting like the blind man who rushes through a powder mill with a blazing torch in his hand. All the while, the poor sin-burdened soul is advancing "day by day towards the black truth of the eternal loneliness of the darkness that lies outside the realm where Christ is King." As differs the labor of rowing over the fathomless sea from the exertion of wading through a rivulet, so differs the penance we should do for many mortal sins as against one mortal sin.

Oh, the bitter black ingratitude of one mortal sin! Oh, the Judas-like conduct of the ingrate soul! The house of our heart should be God's house, a house of prayer, but we by our sins have made it a den of thieves, where the devils carry on an unholy traffic.

We are more ungrateful than the ambitious, covetous son who, impatient at the good health and long life of his father, struck the old man with a bag of gold and killed him, and succeeded to the inheritance—the boy who, dwelling in full

and plenty, did not resist the impious promptings of his greed, and slew the one who gave him life, anticipated the natural coming of death, and hurled out of the world the father who had spent the best years of his life in earning that money for his boy—the father who had stinted himself, and deprived his own body of many pleasures that his son might be wealthy. Our ingratitude is worse than that of the son. "As the body is clad in the clothes, and the flesh in the skin, and the bones in the flesh, and the heart in the whole, so are we, body and soul, clad in the goodness of God.....all these may waste and wear away, but the goodness of God is ever whole." And against that goodness has the ungrateful soul sinned; to that good Father has she cried, "I will not serve Thee, but I will make a league with Thine enemy."

Our Lord died for every soul. He "did not go to His passion as a splendid triumph, bearing His pain like some solemn and mysterious dignity at which the world wondered and was silent; but He went battered and spat upon, with the sweat, blood, and spittle running down His face, contemned by the contemptible, hated by the hateful, rejected by the outcast, barked upon by the curs; and it was that that made His passion so bitter. To go to death with honor and applause, or at least with the silence of respect, were easy: it is not hard to die upon a throne; but to live on a dunghill with Job, that is bitterness." (Benson's: By What Authority?)

And to that vicarious Sufferer, to that great Deliverer, to that crucified Criminal, the sinful soul says in deed, if not in word: "You have suffered for me in vain. I do not wish to profit by Your deliverance. The bruises You have endured for my sins are lost, so far as I am concerned." The soul has joined the hooting mob at the foot of the cross. Her mocking voice can be heard jeering in derision at that lone, forsaken Figure on Calvary.

O base ingratitude! O ingratitude more painful than the crown of thorns! Ingratitude sharper than the spear which has just now gone tearing its way to the divine Heart! Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend, thou hast taken possession of the soul that sins!

What advantage do we derive from our sin? Some merely temporal benefit, perhaps a moment's pleasure; and for that gain—if it be even gain—we have lost heaven and God—God for whom our soul was made, and to whom it tends and will tend for all eternity. We have sold our birthright for a mess of pottage.

The early traders among the Indians caught the fickle eye of the savages, and bought their valuable lands from them with strings of glass beads. How must the poor son of the forest, the victim of civilization, have felt when he realized, if he ever did, that his fruitful soil, his fertile fields, were gone from beneath his feet, and he was a wanderer, and the baubles in his hand

not worth the fire that would destroy them? Like the stupid Indian, the soul has sold or rather given away and lost her heavenly country for a mere nothing. Like the red son of the woods, she has abandoned her beautiful home for the poisonous liquor of sin. Let her fall to her knees and hide her guilty, foolish face, while she cries: "O Jerusalem, city of my God, thy gates are closed against me, and my own hand has barred them."

If any of you, my readers, are now in the dangerous state of mortal sin, do not delay; hasten to make your peace with God, whose majesty you have set at naught. If any of you who are now in the state of grace, committed mortal sin in the past, never forget that sin; have an abiding sorrow for that fall. God has forgiven you, but you, do not forgive yourself. Imitate St. Peter, who, to his death by martyrdom for his Master, never ceased to bewail the sin of his denial, and who shed such copious tears for his cowardly act that the salty streams of penance wore furrows under his eyes and down his cheeks.

Those of you who are in the state of grace, and have never soiled the white robe of your baptismal innocence by one mortal sin, thank God on your bended knees for having preserved you, and guard yourself with the utmost care, that presumption and the tempting of God may not steal into your soul. "He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall."

Sinners, you whose souls are now black with the gloom of mortal sin, may God give you extraordinary graces to bring you to the sacred tribunal of penance! He cannot draw you thither without your free consent, so come you like the prodigal son or the mourning Magdalen.

Children of God, you in whose souls blazes the light of grace kindled there by the Holy Ghost, you who are now pleasing in the sight of God; you of both classes—those who wear the garment of the penitent, those who are robed in original innocence—remember you are carrying the precious jewel of your soul in clay caskets, caskets fragile and hard to protect. Upon you, also, may God shower special graces to-day and every day until the great day dawns when for you sin and the world will be no more!

16. The Queen's Crown

A PRETTY story is told of a pious little girl who every day climbed a steep, rocky mountain side, to crown with roses a weather-beaten statue of the Blessed Virgin. No morning passed but the devout child accomplished her self-imposed task. One day she was ill, so ill that she could not leave her bed. Her greatest grief was that to-day the homely little shrine would be without its usual chaplet of fresh, blooming roses. She said the rosary with unwonted fervor, and at the close, fell into a deep slumber, and dreamed a beautiful dream. She saw our blessed Lady herself, nowise resembling the plain little statue. On her head was a wreath of the fairest, richest, sweetest-smelling roses, flowers such as earth could not produce. A voice, soft and soul-stirring, said graciously: "Daughter, every day thou didst crown my statue with roses, but to-day thou hast crowned myself with thy priceless rosary. Dear to me is the devotion thou payest my image; welcome indeed are thy woodland blossoms, but dearest to me is thy fervent rosary."

One-third of the rosary, or five decades, which is the part commonly said, is called a chaplet, and chaplet means a wreath. The word rosary means a bed of roses. So chaplet and rosary are most fitting words to typify our tender, trusting,

clinging devotion to our dear Mother, the Rose of Jericho.

The rosary is made of vocal prayer and meditation—the sublime Our Father which Christ Himself taught us; the salutation of the Angel Gabriel, the Hail Mary, to which praise of our Mother the Church added the petition of the Holy Mary; and the Trinity-worshipping doxology, the Glory be to the Father. The vocal prayer and meditation go together—the words of the rosary, like jewels strung along the golden cord of meditation, we pondering on the mysteries of our Savior's life and His holy Mother's. Even Protestants cannot justly find fault with us for paying too much honor in the rosary to Mary and too little to the Holy Trinity, for the Our Father honors the First Person of the Trinity, and the Glory be to the Father honors the three Divine Persons.

The salient events of our Lord's life are commemorated in the fifteen mysteries of the rosary. We follow the Messiah from the womb to His Ascension, from the conception of the precious blood to its glorification in heaven. We trace His life from its lowly birth to its grandly mournful close. Our rosary begins and ends with the crucifix—that tiny cross which keeps ever before us in our trials and disappointments the hollow-eyed form of a deserted and wasted Man whom His friends considered a failure.

The Son and the Mother are ever together in the rosary as they were on earth.

In the first mystery, we find the modest little Hebrew girl, the Lily of Israel, listening to the angel's words, and a minute later she is overshadowed by the Holy Ghost, and has conceived the God-Man. The second mystery discovers the Mother-Maid hurrying to Elizabeth, carrying in her womb the Christ-Child to bless and cleanse John the Baptist from original sin. In the third mystery, Mary and her Son are in the stable of Bethlehem, the shepherds bending near the Lamb of God, whose blood will purchase for them eternal pastures. In the fourth mystery Mary and the divine Babe are together in the Temple, where the aged Simeon recognizes the long-promised One. The fifth mystery discloses the happy Mother, after the three days' loss, finding her Boy in the Temple attending to His Father's business.

We do not see Mary bodily present in the first three sorrowful mysteries.

Our Lord was alone in His Agony in the Garden, save for the assisting angel that His Father had sent down from heaven. Mary was not present at the Scourging, to fling her mantle over her Son's naked body, nor was she at the Crowning with Thorns, to offer her homage to the King of men, despised by His creatures. But she was not far away, and all that dismal night was she joined to her Child in spirit.

She was in the crowd that followed Him to the bone-strewn hill of Calvary. She saw the red streaks of blood turning black upon His white

face. She saw the great Criminal nailed to that hideous invention, the cross. She saw the pain-racked Victim expire.

There at the cross she kept her station all during the frightful eclipse which drew the curtain of darkness down over the grim tragedy, but even that thick Egyptian gloom could not hide from the Mother's eyes the limp body whose image was burned as by fire into her brain. She saw the thirsty spear violate the silent sanctuary of the Sacred Heart, greedily searching for the remaining drops of the world-redeeming blood.

Then in the glorious mysteries. The Scripture is silent about when the risen Savior appeared to His Mother; but the fitness of things tells us that to her eyes, first among mortals, was vouchsafed the vision of Him who conquered the grave, and led captivity captive.

She was with Him on Mount Olivet. He left her to console the apostles, those princes of the infant Church, Mary their Queen. He kissed her, and said farewell to His earthly Mother in His soul-melting voice, and she became supernaturally strong; then He ascended to His heavenly Father, and a silver cloud, the chariot of the Holy Ghost, took Him from her sight. The third glorious mystery shows the upper chamber with Mary and her apostle-sons receiving the Holy Spirit—that poor little room the birthplace of the great and glorious Church, just as the wind-swept stable contained the crib of Him who is to judge the world

The fourth mystery paints for us a picture of the Queen of heaven on her way to the throne. She mounts on the wings of love to meet the God who is robed in her own flesh. The closing mystery gives us for meditation a vision of the humble Maiden diademed with stars, surrounded by the angels who salute their Queen.

Protestants sneer at the rosary, because they do not understand its meaning, and to them it seems only a piece of superstition, a relic of the so-called Dark Ages. They do not and cannot know the strong hold the rosary has on the hearts of pious Catholics.

During the bitter persecutions in Ireland, when priests were driven from the land of St. Patrick, and there was no anointed hand to break the Bread of Life for the Irish, the rosary kept alive and burning the light of faith. The priests, the altar, and the Sacrifice were gone; no sanctuary lamp burned faintly before the consecrated Host; but every Irishman had his beads, and they were a talisman to preserve him from the seductions and bright promises of heresy and apostasy; the Rosary fed the longing and love that followed the banished *soggarth aroon.* The cruel, tyrannical English lords and masters gloated over what they thought the death throes of Catholicity in Ireland; but while man proposes, God disposes. There were far more peace, content, and happiness in the poverty-pinched, thatched cots of the Irish peasants than in the lofty castles of the English conquerors.

The Hail Mary occurs most frequently in the rosary. It is a short prayer, but a very strong one, made up of praise and petition. We greet our Mother as "blessed among women"; and then we ask her to "pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death." To pray for us now—here, to-day, at this very hour, we need her help, but at death's cold hour we shall need her more. Our Lady's intercession will be gauged and determined by the fervor of our prayer. Do our words come from the fullness of our hearts, or are they mere lip-born phrases? Do we ever say our Holy Mary without laying any weight upon our words? It is a heathenish practice to string out sentence after sentence of prayer without attending to what our words mean.

It is strong prayer, not long prayer, that counts, though there is no reason why a prayer cannot be long and strong at the same time. Strength of prayer is not measured by length of prayer, but rather by its intensity. However, to-day there is too much fun made of those who pray long, too much caviling at the prayer which keeps us long upon our knees. It is quite probable that the man who prays an hour a day prays better, far better, than the fellow who gives three minutes to the same exercise, and that while he is dressing and lacing his shoes in the morning, or while he lies covered up in bed wooing sleep, capricious jade, by mumbling sleepily a few distracted orations.

Nuns and monks wear the rosary in honor of the Blessed Virgin. Surely we can carry our beads about with us in her honor. The beads need not be of pearl and gold, but they should have on them the blessing of the Church. We should have the custom of saying the rosary daily, of offering to our Mother our wreath of roses between dawn and dusk, or our rising from sleep and our lying down to rest. If we have not the happy, grace-enriched habit of daily recitation of the beads, to-day, here and now we will resolve never to miss that exercise from now on until the hour of our death.

We will suit the mysteries to our moods. "We stand in need of one kind of devotion in times of temptation," says Thomas à Kempis, "and of another in time of peace and rest. Some devotions we willingly think on when we are sad; others when we are joyful in the Lord."

When our hearts are bounding with the gladness of life, and the spring air has infused its sweetness into our blood, we will ponder on the joyful mysteries. When great blessings and temporal success are our lot, we will recite the glorious mysteries in thanksgiving to our heavenly King and His Queen Mother, whence flow those gifts of God.

And when the skies of our life are overcast, and the lightnings of pain shoot, and the thunders of hovering sorrows roll; when we have come from the coffin of our dear dead, and still have

the feel of the cold, marble brow upon our hand, then particularly will we meditate on the sorrowful mysteries. Like the old Irish woman (Blunt's *Old Woman's Rosary*), we will reflect on the "mysteries that end with the Crucified," and if, like the old woman, "we cry on the sorrowful mysteries with tears as big as our beads," the beads and the tears will console us. To our Mother of Sorrows, with her precious Dead upon her bosom, we will talk of our dead, or of the sorrow which crushes our bosom. She who knew how to suffer knows how to console.

By much meditation on the mysteries of the rosary, we shall imitate the virtues they contain, and imitating the virtues, we shall obtain the rewards they implicitly promise.

17. The Throneless King

DURING long ages the promised Messiah had been expected, watched for, longed for. Holy souls, like Simeon and Anna, the dwellers in the temple of the Lord, had sighed after the coming of the Redeemer. Ambitious souls, like the pompous Pharisees, desired the advent of the anointed One of God, the Deliverer. Jerusalem, the city of Jehovah, the former home of the holy psalmist, King David, was no longer free. She lay humbled under the hand of Rome. Her adversaries were become her lords, her enemies were enriched with her spoils. Her splendors were eclipsed by those of the heathen cities.

Then came the foretold Messiah; the flower bloomed which was to shoot forth from the root of Jesse. There was no blast of earthly trumpets at the birth of the new King, no waving of proud banners, no shouting of a rejoiced people. The Christ had come like a thief in the midnight, and the choirs of heaven were singing glorious anthems, but the world sat stolid and stupid under the Bethlehem moon and silver stars.

In Herod's palace there were feasting and rioting, the clink of wine glasses, the echo of ribald joke. The inns were humming with voices, and were loud with the tumultuous clatterings of pots and dishes. But there was no bed pre-

pared in Herod's palace for the Heir of the Father, no room for Him in the inn. The Lord of all came unto His own, and his own received Him not. They despised Him, while He yet lay in the chaste bosom of the Lily of Israel, like a little unopened bud.

There was no room in the inn for the Savior of mankind. The foxes were secure and snug in their holes under the ground, the birds of the air were chirping contentedly in their warm, downy nests, but the Son of Man, a pilgrim in His mother's womb, was homeless. She had nowhere to lay her weary head.

The extreme youth of the Blessed Virgin, for she was but a girl, should have aroused sympathy in the hard hearts at Bethlehem. St. Joseph felt the cold neglect more keenly than did Mary; she had her God in the flesh with her; and her maternal love was longing to see with the eyes of the body the Immensity which the eyes of her soul had been contemplating for nine months. But Joseph knocked in vain; no shelter was given his delicate spouse.

How often has our Lord knocked at the door of our hearts, only to find there no room for Himself. The vanities of the world, the pride of life, our sins, so filled those hearts that there was no admittance for the humble One who knocked, and He turned sadly away. The abomination of desolation standing in the holy place! Our hearts

that should have been the temples of the Holy Ghost, so crowded with created things that, like the inn, we had no room for the Creator!

Rejected by His rational creatures, by men made little lower than the angels, despised by the works of His hands, the beings gifted with free will, the Maker turned to His irrational creatures; He trespassed, as Father Faber says, on the hospitality of brutes. Christ was born in the stable, His sacred brow fanned by the warm breath of the patient beasts. Mary is rapt in still communion that transcends the imperfect offices of prayer and praise. (Wordsworth.) She has suffered because of the bitter neglect of the Bethlehemites, but she is not vindictive.

The divine Child is resting in His Mother's arms—just as thirty-three years hence He will be laid again on that sorrowing bosom beneath the cross. There He rested on that holy breast, just as to-day He lies in the Blessed Sacrament on the corporals of our altars. He is obedient and silent now as He was at Bethlehem—then to the will of his mother; to-day to the will of His priests, who bring Him down from heaven, and give Him to His faithful souls on earth. Brotherly love, love for you, love for me, has brought Christ to the dreary stable from His bright throne above. The cords of a mutual nature, the bonds of flesh and blood, bind Him to you and to me; for His body was like ours, only sinless. He was made like to us, in all things, sin alone excepted.

Irrational nature is rejoicing that its God has come down to it. Night has flung off her sable cloak of cloud; her season of Advent and mourning is over; she is glittering with starry jewels to greet her King. Like Esther on entering into the presence of Assuerus, the night is resplendent in royal robes, and over all is the sheen of the moon—over the mysterious stable, where the shadows are thronging, over the mists which hang afar off, like silken veils.

But the Lord of all, the Fairest of the sons of men, was not to have Mary and Joseph for His only rational adorers. Not far away were shepherds keeping the night-watches over their flocks, simple, God-fearing men, who had long prayed for the birth of the Messiah, and whose hearts now burned within them, they knew not why. Behold! a bright light, the brightness of God, shone round about the humble shepherds, and they fell upon their faces in great fear until an angel of the Lord reassured them with the words: "Fear not. I bring you good tidings of great joy. Christ the Lord is born in the city of David. You shall find the Messiah an Infant in a stable at Bethlehem."

Loudly and sweetly sang the heavenly army of angels that now appeared to the shepherds, and the echoes took up the song: "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will." The bell-like notes of the angelic choirs were ringing out the darkness from the

land, the darkness and shadows of death, the shadows and darkness of hell; and those same golden notes were ringing in the Christ. Angel hands were drawing forth the cheerful day from night, and were touching the East and lighting the light that shone when Hope was born. (*In Memoriam.*)

As the dawn was breaking, the shepherds came with haste, and they found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger. One glance at the lovely face on the straw, and the mystery of the Incarnation was revealed to the simple, worshiping shepherds. Many things were revealed to them because they loved much—things which the haughty Pharisees and the doctors of the law knew not.

God loves humble hearts, and what He hides from the proud, He reveals to the lowly and poor in spirit. The shepherds have not the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, which later the wealthy Magi will bring to their King, the God-Man; but the simple watchers, gentle as their own timid sheep, offer the adoration of their hearts—a gift so precious as to buy life eternal.

Listen now! "Glory to God in the highest!" is ringing forth again; but the voice is not the voice of angels, the refrain comes not from heaven to earth. Nay, listen! 'Tis below now in the humble wind-swept stable. The song is soaring on high from human hearts aglow with heavenly love (Tabb)—the song of the shepherds.

The angels could not and cannot refuse their love to God, but the shepherds had free will, and could have withheld their adoration if they chose.

But the lowly toilers did not hold back their love, and they sang at the crib a canticle which was new to earth, a canticle which ever since has gone pealing up to heaven wherever Mass is said—a canticle which will continue to rise as sweet incense from our altars as long as there are human tongues here below: "Glory to God in the highest!"

Then the shepherds went back to their flocks —back to their old monotonous existence, but they were changed men; about their lives now was a sort of divine halo. The Evangelist writes that the shepherds spoke to their friends and kinsfolk and acquaintances of "all the things they had heard and seen"—of the army of angels singing, the stable-cave, the worn foster-father, the child-Mother, loveliest daughter of Israel, the prophesied woman whose heel should crush the serpent's head, and the wonderful Babe-King, the hidden King, who lay on straw with the splendor of heaven about Him. Thus were the shepherds the first apostles to preach the kingdom of God on earth.

The after-years of the shepherds "were hidden in the pathetic obscurity which is common to all blameless poverty; and they are hidden now in the sea of light which lies, like a golden

veil of mist, close round the throne of the Incarnate Word." (Faber.)

"Let us go over to Bethlehem." Let us make of our hearts, poor and unsteadfast though they are, cribs for the sweet Babe. Christ is coming to every one of us. God forbid that we should imitate the Bethlehemites, and shut the door of our hearts against Him. "He went out from the city of David, never to enter it again. What a dreary life ours would be if He came *this* Christmas, and asked to be born in our hearts, and we closed the doors of our soul in His face! How sad that Christmas day for the soul out of whose life the Babe of Bethlehem has gone never to return!" (O'Rourke's *Under the Sanctuary Lamp.*)

But no, our Christmas shall not be of that sort. We will become children again; all of us will go back to the days of our youth. Our God became a child to-day—He, the Image of the omnipotent Father; and you and I will come as children to His straw-lined crib. The outer chambers of our heart may keep what unsinful tenants they have; the outer chambers we will give to our friends and relatives; but the innermost part of our heart, the holy of holies, we will reserve for our lowly God. We will imitate the Lamb of God in His humility.

"Without a humble imitation of the divine Author of our.....religion," says Washington, the father of his country and ours, "we can never

hope to be a happy nation." Much less can we hope to be happy men.

Bethlehem rejected the Infant-King; Jerusalem cast out and killed the God-Man. Kneeling before the crib, we will atone for that cold cruelty and our own sins, no less cruel. Our imagination must picture the cave of Bethlehem and the crib. Our love and adoration will be of great help to us in painting the scene and bringing it before our mind's eye. And as we kneel with devotion meditating on that crib of long ago and the little Jewish Babe, let us remember that a day is coming, how soon we cannot say, when we shall see Him, and shall look into His face, as the shepherds did. That day will be our day of judgment, awful, yet sweet day—awful, because we shall see our sins in all their naked deformity; sweet, because we shall look into the mild, forgiving eyes of the Babe who came to take those sins away.

18. Our Ecclesiastical Storehouses

WHEN the seven years of famine swooped down upon Egypt, as the patriarch Joseph had foretold to Pharaoh, interpreting that part of his dreams which contained the seven lean kine and the seven thin ears blasted by a burning wind—when the seven years of scarcity came, Pharaoh sent all his subjects to the provident governor Joseph, who threw open his granaries, filled with golden grains of corn; and though "the famine prevailed in the whole world," there was bread in all the land of the Nile.

The Church with her seven Sacraments is just such a storehouse in a world stricken with spiritual famine, and crying out: "What shall we do to be saved?" She flings wide open the seven doors of her sacramental granary, and dispenses grace and spiritual and temporal blessings in abundance. At the door of Baptism, the crowd is great, clamoring piteously for admission. At the twin doors of Penance and Holy Eucharist, too, the mob is exceeding large, outnumbering the sands of the sea; and so on, every door of the seven having its quota of anxious seekers.

The Savior of mankind, the divine Head of the Church, remained thirty-three years on earth, doing good, opening the eyes of the blind, healing the sick, soothing the sore of heart, curing

the maimed and the halt. He continues that work in His Sacraments—opening the eyes of the sin-blind soul to the light of faith in Baptism, curing the sick soul with the medicine of Penance, strengthening the weak-kneed, halting faith with Confirmation, nourishing the starved heart with the Eucharist, anointing in Extreme Unction the weary, galled soul that is soon to lay down her burden.

On Calvary, He shed His precious blood for the world. It flowed copiously from His body through His five glorious wounds. That blood saved the souls of men from destruction, and that precious stream Christ has left on earth shut up in the body of His Church.

The seven Sacraments are the channels or conduits through which that saving stream is applied to our souls. Just as our veins carry strength and energy to our hearts, so do the Sacraments convey the precious blood to our souls, purifying them with that wine of virgins, and giving them power to fight the good fight.

Good and bad seed are cast into our hearts, the good from on high, the bad from below; the Sacraments, like a gentle rain, fall upon us with a tender strength, and the good seed waxes sturdy, and chokes the bad.

The Sacraments are busy always and ever in the world weaving bright patches of virtuous color into the warp and woof of men's lives, and making of those lives wedding garments to adorn souls at the immortal Bridal Feast.

The Sacraments are the seven angels ascending and descending on the golden ladder which Christ's hand placed between His kingdom in heaven and His kingdom on earth—descending with bright sacramental graces; here marking souls with the mystic, indelible signets of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders; there adorning white, spotless souls with new jewels of heroic virtue; and then ascending with the merits of earth, the prayers and good works, to the throne above, where those merits rise up as incense from the thuribles of the seraphs.

St. Thomas Aquinas draws a striking comparison between a man's natural life and the life of the soul.

Seven things are especially necessary in the life of the body, five for the perfection of the individual, and two for the perfection of society. The individual must be born into the world. He is born into the life of grace by Baptism, the great Sacrament which draws him forth from the dark womb of original sin, and brings him into the light of faith, faith which is the morning star preceding the sun of glory. The babe must grow and wax strong. Spiritually he is strengthened by Confirmation in which Sacrament the Holy Ghost confers on the soul the gift of soul-sustaining fortitude. The child must be fed and nourished. In the arid desert of this life, the manna of the Blessed Eucharist, the bread coming down from heaven, having in it the sweetness of heavenly foretaste, is the nutriment of the soul. The

body must be healed of sickness, and its wounds cured. Penance brings the sin-diseased soul to the priest of God whom Christ has left as physician with a panacea for every manner of spiritual ailment. The priestly doctor of the sinner "knows how to calm, to warn, to strengthen him, to chasten him likewise by symbolical punishments, and at last by a complete washing away of his guilt, to render him happy, and to give him back pure and cleansed, the tablet of his manhood." (Goethe, *Autobiography.*)

After illness, a man must recover his pristine strength and former health by wiping out every trace of weakness and disease. Extreme Unction produces this effect in the soul by obliterating the relics of sins, and making her strong against the return of old spiritual maladies or the attacks of new destructive foes. The perfect state of society calls for the power of ruling the multitude and the propagation of the human race. The Sacrament of Orders gives to a God-chosen man the power and right to govern Christ's mystic body, the faithful members of His Church.

As in former centuries the priests of the old law sat at the gates of the city to hear the cases of justice, so to-day do the anointed of the new dispensation stand at the gates of life, ever ready to receive into the Church militant those who are born into time, and ready to prepare for the Church triumphant those who are leaving the world.

Matrimony the Sacrament sanctifies marriage the contract; the Sacrament gives members to the Church, as the contract gives citizens to the state. Matrimony brings its fruit to the temple of Holy Orders, where that precious offspring is blessed and consecrated to beget seed for the world invisible and eternal. The Sacrament of Orders protects the matrimonial holy of holies. In the bosom of matrimony is nurtured the tiny plant that is to become a cedar of Libanus—the mighty sacerdotal tree that is to guard and protect from the storms of atheism and free love and divorce the noble mother who gave it birth.

Three of the Sacraments imprint a character on the soul.

"Amid the ardors of heaven, and in the dazzling splendors of the beatific vision, the mystic signets, the inexplicable character of the Sacraments, three in number, as if adumbrating the three divine persons, shine forth as distinct beauties and brighten through eternity. The character of Baptism is, as it were, the finger-mark of the eternal Father on the soul. The character of Order glistens like the unfailing unction of the eternal Son. The character of Confirmation is the deep mark which the fires of the Holy Ghost burned in, the pressure of His tremendous fortitude, which was laid upon us, and yet we perished not, so tenderly and so gently did He touch us. In the wild fury of the tempestuous fires of hell, the same characters glow terribly. They are indestructible even there, fiery shames, intolerable

disgraces, distinct fountains of special agony forever and forever." (Faber *Precious Blood.*)

Baptism gives us the right of citizenship in the Church—the right to her graces, the right to participate in her common suffrages and prayers, the right to her penalty-destroying indulgences. Confirmation enlists us in the army of the Lord of Hosts, buckles on our armor—the breastplate of justice, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; and makes us valiant soldiers in the battle with hell. Holy Orders promotes the soldiers from the lower ranks in the army of Christ. Confirmation takes the ordinary citizen of the Church, does all she can to make him a gallant warrior, and then passes him on to Holy Orders. Holy Orders with strong, firm, but gentle hand, leads the would-be leader into her seminary, tests him, trains him, refines him, gives him forced marches, punishes him when he fails, rewards him when he succeeds, and if in the end she finds him worthy, she confers on him his epaulets, and sends him forth with the virtues and powers of a captain.

The Sacraments confer common graces, yet every Sacrament has a grace peculiar to itself. "Just as the sun brings out the blossoms and paints their variegated leaves in parti-colored patterns, though the whole leaf is supplied with the same sap through the same veins, so does the Sun of Justice work in the special graces of the Sacraments."

The special grace of Baptism has the greatest cleansing effect. With its angel hand, Baptism sweeps away from the soul every fault and deserved punishment; holds up for the soul the lamp of faith, driving away the impenetrable darkness of original sin; and leads the soul to the gate of sanctifying grace; guides the soul past the cherubim holding the flaming sword, put there by Adam's sin, and leaves the regenerated soul in the garden of God's favor and good pleasure. Baptism visits the soul only once, but she leaves strong fortifications behind her. If sin invades and breaks down the protecting wall about the soul, Baptism sends her twin sister, Penance, to heal the breach.

The special grace of the Eucharist is to feed the soul with Fruit from the Tree of Life, and to generate in her a disgust for the things of sin and a nausea for worldly, distracting pastimes. Confirmation ekes out the grace of Baptism and imparts the courage of Christ. The apostles received the Holy Eucharist before their Master died, yet even then fortitude was wanting to them. Only when after His ascension the promised Paraclete descended, and filled the abode of their hearts, did the apostles have the courage to obey God rather than men, and speak the truth openly, preaching the Gospel in season and out of season.

The specialty of Extreme Unction is to follow Penance, and gather up the relics and fragments of sin which cumber the ground of the

soul. Extreme Unction is a sort of pensive Ruth that gleans the remains of sin which have escaped the mighty hands of the great reaper, Penance.

Holy Orders gazes down into the eyes of the young Levite, as long ago the Master looked with love on the face of the young man who had great possessions; and the Sacrament gives the baptized, confirmed, Penance-and-Eucharist-strengthened soul a new grace, the grace to be a second Christ and to make of his heart a pure mirror reflecting the virtues of his Lord; gives the young Aaron of the New Law keys to bind and loose, and the needed endurance for his "slow martyrdom of speaking to the deaf, of explaining to the blind, and of pleading with the hardened."

The special grace of Matrimony helps the husband and wife to bear cheerfully and happily the marriage yoke and to share each other's sorrows. Many a man dwelling in the tents of wickednesss has been led by Matrimony's holy hand into the house of God.

We can never thank our Lord sufficiently for the Sacraments, those storehouses of His grace. We cannot now appreciate fully their value. We must see the Sacraments from the other side of the grave to understand what they have done and are doing for the world and for us.

It was through God's sheer generosity that we received Baptism, but our own efforts take us to the life-producing fountains of Penance

and Holy Eucharist. Baptism started the little vessel of our soul adown the stream of time on its way to a happy eternity. Contrite use of Penance will keep us in the right channel, and off the rocks which would cause moral shipwreck—those rocks white with the foam flecks of passion, and surrounded with the flotsam and jetsam of lost souls. The Holy Eucharist will draw to our sails God's favorable winds, and "such a tide as moving seems asleep," every hour bringing us nearer home; and at the end Extreme Unction will be our pilot to bring us safely from the dangerous main into the port of eternal life.

19. The Pearl of Great Price

THE fairy tales we pored over in our childhood, the days when we were without guile—those tales always had their beautiful virgin whom the dragon pursued, or the mighty-toothed monster that dwelt in a frightful den, and that had to be fed at times on the fairest virgins, else he would spread destruction through the land.

The dragon is going through every country on the earth to-day seeking the virgins whom he may devour. He is up in the land of the eternal snows and the midnight sun; he is busy in the torrid zone, and everywhere his victims outnumber the falling autumn leaves. The dragon is impurity, and he is hunting for the innocent souls, souls who are wearing their bridal baptismal robe unpolluted.

Take up any morning's paper, and read for ten minutes, and without fail you will find some fearful tragedy following in the train of impurity. A beautiful young girl dead in the river, a suicide—another victim to the foul god of impurity. A man pacing a prison cell, wondering how many weeks or months will elapse before he shall pay the penalty of his crime on the scaffold or in the electric chair. Impurity has been his ruin; has led him to redden his hands in the blood of his paramour.

This sin is only the more dangerous because it is so common. Impurity is everywhere today—in the flaring "scare-heads" of the yellow journals, in the cleverly worded chapters of the "best sellers." It disports itself in gaudy dress or undress on the stage, whether the theatre be the high-priced "legitimate" or the cheaper vaudeville. It reaches our ears through the medium of music, whether in the lascivious opera or in the words of popular songs. There seems to be no escape from it.

Men rush headlong into this sin. They boast of their filthy conquests; they glory in their shame; they number their low deeds with complacency; for "A foul heart gives forth a vapor which veils the mind's eyes, but a pure heart is surrounded by a crystal medium." (Elliott's "Life of Christ.") They wear not the white flower of a blameless life; their badge is not the lily of purity, but the blood-red rose of lust. Too many are like the earth-born "beetle which, when enlivened by the influence of the summer heats, flies abroad, and passes over the delightful fields, neglectful of the sweet blossoms and fragrant flowers that are in its way, till at last, directed by its sordid inclination, it settles on some nauseous excrement." (Keating's "History of Ireland.")

Of all sins, impurity is the most shameful. It will not walk out into the sunlight; it skulks in the shadows. The impure man seeks darkness for his sin. The cheek will flush, the eyelid fall,

with a natural shame, if there be light. The abandoned woman will drink liquor to drown her modesty.

Yet, does darkness hide the sinner from God's eye? Ascend into heaven, God is there; descend into hell, there, too, can His eye reach. Had we the wings of the swiftest birds, and could fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, even there God would see us. King David said: "Perhaps darkness shall cover me; and night shall be my light in my pleasures. But," he added, "darkness shall not be dark to Thee, and night shall be light as the day"—the darkness of the blackest night, and the light of the brightest day are alike to God.

That all-seeing eye pierces to the very marrow of our bones. The words of the prophet Jeremias are full of meaning for the impure soul: "Shall a man be hid in secret places, and I not see him, saith the Lord, do I not fill heaven and earth?" And those lines of Ecclesiasticus: "Every man ....saying: Who seeth me? Darkness compasseth me about, and the walls cover me, and no man seeth me; whom do I fear? the Most High will not remember my sins....And He knoweth not that the eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men, and the bottom of the deep, and looking into the hearts of men, into the most hidden parts." Can it be that He who formed from nothing the glorious eye of man; the eye that is the light of the countenance, the sun of

the human face, without which the loveliest features would be plain and blank; the eye that can pierce the gloom of a dungeon, or look fearlessly at heaven's bright blue; the eye that can perceive and study the mighty oak on the distant mountain or the tiny blade of grass not a yard away, can it be that the Maker of the wonderful human eye shall not see the secret sin?

Let no man deceive himself. God knows the path each one of us is treading. We take no step that He does not see. Since the very hairs of our head are numbered, and our Lord Himself told us that they are, how much more carefully are regarded our actions and even our secret thoughts!

The sin of impurity is like a corrupting cancer, once it gets its horrible claws fastened on the soul. To break away from it, prayer and struggle are necessary on the part of man, and great grace necessary on the part of God. With every fresh sin of impurity, the chains of the victim are tightened, those chains "forged in sin's eternal fire," making it harder for him to leave his filthiness. The will becomes weaker and weaker till at length the soul ceases to struggle at all against temptation, and is the abject slave of passion. A man might as well drink sea water to quench his thirst, as think of going on indulging in this sin, and resolving at some future day to amend his ways. His will then, when he tries to curb it, shall tear away from him, and carry him to ruin everlasting.

God loathes the sin of impurity; it sickens His heart. He visits this vice with the most terrible chastisements. In the Old Testament, we find thrilling examples of His wrath, when He had grown weary of this foul sin. The guilty inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah had multiplied their sins of unnatural lust. The stench of their crime arose to the heavens. Men groveled in their sins like beasts, and went far towards destroying the image of God in themselves. Then fell upon the cities a rain of fire and brimstone; fire that devoured in an instant the polluted bodies, flesh and bone, of the depraved people, and sent their souls shrieking down to hell, where their groans and cries will resound for all eternity. Onan, the son of Juda, was struck dead by the Lord, "because he did a detestable thing." Go into certain wards of our hospitals, and witness the terrible suffering inflicted by nature, outraged by this sin, and you can judge how God loves purity, and hates this form of iniquity.

Our Lord spoke to Pilate, though he was a pagan Roman, but the pure Lamb was dumb when he stood in the presence of His king who had Hebrew blood. Christ would not notice Herod, because Herod was an adulterer.

God may seem to you too severe in His punishments for this sin; but only Purity itself, as He is, can realize what impurity is. We look at the face; He pierces to the soul. The man who would be pure must be on his guard, ever on the

watch for the approach of his foe. Eternal vigilance is the price of purity. We carry our treasure in earthen vessels, and must guard it with a jealous care. This does not mean that we appoint ourselves crusaders in a holy war against this vice, that we throw up our hands in horror and rend our garments, if we hear an immodest word or jest. No, discretion must be used. If we want to be free from impure men, we shall have to sprout wings on a sudden, and fly to where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

But our heart will warn us at once where there is danger for us. That picture! We ought not to look upon it; we will not. That suggestive newspaper narrative we will not read. That lewd play we will not attend. We will guard our eyes. They are the windows through which the devil, liar, murderer, thief that he is, enters our soul to kill sanctifying grace, and bear away our virtue. "Death has come up through the windows.... My eye has wasted my soul," laments Jeremias. An indiscreet glance may cause months of temptation. "Oh, who does not know the misery of a haunting thought which comes again and again in spite of rejection to annoy, if it cannot seduce? Or of some odious and sickening imagination, in no sense one's own, but forced upon the mind from without? Or of evil knowledge, gained with or without a man's fault, but which he would give a great price to be rid of at once and forever?" (Newman.)

We will avoid that dangerous conversation; and above all things, we will shun friendships in which our soul's salvation is imperilled. We must not "with unbashful forehead woo the means of weakness and debility." Banish the spread-poppy pleasures, the delight "That speedy dies and turns to carrion." Our soul is the temple of the Holy Ghost, a temple dearer than even Solomon's in all its glory, that splendid mass of snow and gold. Shall we admit the abomination of desolation into that holy place, our soul, God's dwelling?

We must not trifle in a matter of such importance. We must act like valiant men, not play the weakling. At the first knock of temptation, we must bar the door. At the first bad thought, we must turn our attention to something else. We must not struggle with the tempter; he is stronger than we are. Flight is always the surest guarantee of victory in temptations so alluring to the flesh. A swift, short prayer to the Blessed Virgin; a child-like trust in God. We must keep calm; losing our heads will profit nothing. Only one thing is necessary; keep the temptation as far off as possible. Let the demon once set his foot within the doorway of our heart, and it will not be long till he has conquered us. If love does not move us, fear should. "Punishment is a fruit that unsuspected ripens within the flower of the pleasure that concealed it." (Emerson.)

God does not want us to worry about our temptations. They come to us with His permission. In our hour of struggle, His loving eye is on us, His Sacred Heart is yearning over us, His arms are outstretched to help us. Few of us do sufficient penance for our sins. What penance is one-half so terrible as temptations against the holy virtue? Let us do our part, and God will do His. If we do not lay down our arms at the first attack, but with our reliance on God steadfastly withstand the tempter, victory will be ours. We shall gain more merit in a half-hour of such fighting than we should in a week of fasting and prayer. God sends us to the combat, it is not of our own choosing; we are fighting for His honor and glory and for our soul's salvation. It is His will that we should battle; we cannot doubt that. He sends us to the combat; He will crown us at the close.

20 Where the King Reigns

If the President of the United States were to send word to each and every one of us that on a certain day he should hold a reception for our special benefit, and should hold the reception so close to our homes that any one of us could walk into his presence in the space of fifteen minutes, how many of us, do you think would fail to appear at the reception? And what should we receive from him? At the most, a handshake and perhaps a conventional word of greeting. Yet to win that handshake we would walk through rain and mud, or sleet and slush, stand in an overheated room, and submit to no end of jostling and elbowing from the eager crowd. And after all, how much the better should we be for that meeting with the first man of the land?

Now, if persons who make a practice of staying away from Mass on Sundays or holydays of obligation, would only reflect, they should see in an instant how very inconsistent their conduct is. They should see how they give the lie to the philosophical definition that "man is a rational animal;" for rational such persons are not. The man who tramps two miles to see a cheap circus or an eye-damaging "movie" show, will not walk a third of a mile to be present at Mass. The woman who rises before cockcrow to adorn her head, and

trim her person, and marcn off on an excursion into the country or city, is too weary, forsooth, to get up and go to eight o'clock Mass. Catholics who make all kinds of sacrifices for pleasure, are conspicuous by their absence at Mass. The pews that belong to them have empty jaws to greet the priest when he looks down from the altar. Dust has gathered on their prayer books lying neglected in the corner of their pews, and an artistic spider, tiny but laborious, is weaving a web about the pages that open at the ordinary of the Mass.

Oh, if those heedless, careless souls would but ponder on the losses, both spiritual and temporal, they sustain, what a reformation in their lives there should be! The Lamb of God lies bleeding on the altar. The precious blood that can wash the child of sin and darkness, and make him almost an angel of purity and brightness—that golden stream is flowing in vain for those persons; the very souls that need the cleansing are not here. The angels adoring the Blessed Sacrament gaze sadly at the vacant seats of the church, then burst into fresh hymns of love and reparation to the Sacred Heart that is so coldly neglected.

In that last sad hour, when our dying Redeemer hung gasping upon the cross, His holy body quivering with anguish, His thorn-crowned head seeking vainly for rest against the hard wood upon which He was racked, it was not bodily pain that rung from His sacred lips the bitterest

cry ever heard upon earth—"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" No, it was grief, the burning grief that consumed His soul, the grief that was sapping out His life; it was grief that wrenched from His broken heart that awful cry on Calvary.

His eyes, though dim with death, and blinded with the sweat of dissolution, pierced through the mists of time, pierced through the clouds of centuries to come, and saw—dear God! saw your heart, saw mine. Those weary eyes saw the souls that, despite His sacrifice on the cross, would be lost through their own perversity; would go down to hell, despite His efforts to save them —souls that would walk for years carelessly on the brink of hell fire, and at last plunge into the unquenchable flames; souls that would despise His graces, and give themselves over to evil. The ears of our Savior heard the dying groans of the sinful wretch sinking into despair; He heard the last wail of the suicide flying into the face of his Father. The sight was too much for that divine-human heart. It broke through grief, and grief alone gave birth to that terrible cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Is it any stretch of the imagination to picture our Lord looking from His home on our altars down at the empty seats in our churches, just as on that bitter Friday He looked vainly from His cross for His disciples who were not there? No, they were not there, they whom He loved so

well. Is it any exaggeration to picture our blessed Savior looking down from the priest's hands, when the sacred Host is raised at the elevation, looking with longing eyes for the Catholics who have stayed away? Could that Sacred Heart be stabbed now with a lance, as it was wounded on the cross, the cruel blow would be given by the hand of the Catholic who remains away from Mass on Sunday.

Jesus offers Himself on the altar to atone for the sins of men, and that very sacrifice of the Son of God is turned by men to their own destruction; that peace offering but serves to set them at war with God, that all-healing balm is of no use to their souls; for the reason that those men will not be present at the adorable sacrifice, will not make use of their Lord's peace offering, will not apply the salutary medicine to their sick and suffering souls. Jesus, the God-Man, offers Himself at Mass to expiate sin, and the hard and perverse hearts of men cause that offering to become only a new source of sin for themselves. Oh, awful, prophetic words of holy Simeon in the temple: "This child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many!" Dreadful thought, that Christ, instead of the salvation of our souls, should in that great sacrifice prove to be our ruin!

O Catholics, are you so lost to religion, so cold of heart, so ungrateful to your Redeemer, that you can bear to remain away for weeks and months from the sacramental presence of

your God! O children of Christ, O sons and daughters bought with the price of the precious blood, O wayward sheep over whom the Shepherd's dear heart yearns, will you not respond to your Father's call, will you not hearken to the voice of your Shepherd? Oh, make not of that Father a stern and severe Judge! Oh, wander not too far, careless sheep, lest you be irrevocably lost amid the thorns and briars of sin, and fall victims to the merciless, roaring lion that night and day goeth about seeking whom he may devour!

Only when we stand before the judgment seat of God, and see as we are seen; only when the book of our life is opened, and we gaze upon its blotted and disfigured pages, only when we are blinded with the beauty of our Judge, shall we know and realize what favors were lavished upon us at Mass, favors spiritual and temporal, and only in that dreadful moment shall we learn of the many losses we experienced when we wilfully absented ourselves from Mass on Sunday.

The spiritual losses of the man who wilfully and needlessly stays away from Mass on Sundays, cannot be estimated. Suffice it to say that he deals his soul her death-blow, and it is only through the mercy of the offended God that the dead soul knows a resurrection. Though slain by her own hand, God deigns to raise again to life that ingrate soul. But let us beware. God does not bind himself to rescue us always from

the toils of sin. We may strike our soul once too often; we may deal eternal death to her, and then may come darkness that will last as long as God is God.

But, O Thou bruised Figure on the cross, ward off from our souls such a darkness! Let not the cloud of our sins shut out Calvary from our sight. When we with our own ruthless hands have stripped from our souls the golden veil of innocence and religious peace; when sin has rent the rock of faith from beneath our feet, and darkness, the Egyptian darkness of despair, is beginning to steal upon our souls, O in that moment aid us; let Thy voice be heard above the rumble of the storm! Cry out to Thy Father for us! O forsake us not! Say to Him, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

Besides the spiritual losses of those who miss Mass, there are temporal losses as well. Let many a one examine his conscience. Perhaps that business failure may be traced to your habit of missing Sunday Mass. Perhaps that severe illness; perhaps that departure of your favorite friend; perhaps that death of your darling child, over whom you almost wept your life away, and in whose grave you seem to have buried your heart—perhaps that may have come from the source of your sin of missing Mass. As surely as the shadow follows the substance, as surely as night follows day, so surely does punishment follow sin. "Crime and punishment grow out

of one stem..... The specific stripes may follow late upon the offense; but they follow, because they accompany it." (Emerson.) "There is no escaping the Nemesis of sin, except by repentance." (Canon Sheehan.) God washes your eyes with tears, that you may see His mercies better. He is afflicting you in time that He may spare you in eternity. He is acting as the physician who uses the lancet; He cuts to heal. But you can stay the scourge. Go to Mass on Sunday.

And the temporal blessings. Our Lord is at all times lavish with His favors, but never more so than at Mass. He there offers Himself as a sacrifice to His Father, the only sacrifice that is worthy of the all-holy God. What was the sacrifice of Abel, the sacrifice of Solomon, compared to this great, grand, ever-renewed sacrifice of the Mass? Jesus was once a man on earth like us. He suffered from heat and cold, hunger and thirst, persecution and calumny. In all things, He was made like unto us, sin alone excepted. He knows our wants—even our smallest wants—and no matter that concerns us is too trifling for Him. His delights are to be with the children of men.

Before the institution of the holy sacrifice of the Mass, people in great numbers walked the earth under the sway of Satan. The New Testament abounds in many such examples; the man in the synagogue with the unclean spirit; the one possessed by a devil, whom the devil had render-

ed blind and dumb; the two men possessed of a legion of evil spirits; and the poor boy whom the devil had made a lunatic. Evil spirits dwelt in young and old. We seldom or never hear of such things nowadays. The beneficent influence of the Blessed Sacrament restrains the powers of hell. The Shepherd is here in the midst of His flock, and the wolf must needs skulk afar off. The prince of darkness dreads the Holy One who is with us all days even to the consummation of the world.

Then, too, people of our day are not so grievously punished for their sins as people were before the coming of our Lord. First, the crimes of men brought on the awful deluge. Then the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah became so exceedingly great that fire rained from heaven. King David, for a single venial sin of vanity, was punished by the death of 70,000 of his subjects. The old dispensation was one of fear; the new dispensation is one of love. The justice of the Father is tempered by the mercy of His immolated Son.

And it is so easy for us to get to Mass. Perhaps there is a mile to walk. The exercise will be good for our health. Low Mass is short; the Church makes things convenient for us. Low Mass never lasts more than a half hour, so little of your precious time and mine will be lost. But let me entreat you not to consider that time wasted which is given to God. Everything is arranged for our benefit. The Church is a lov-

ing mother, and it is to be feared that we, her children, are only too often unappreciative and ungrateful, oh, so ungrateful. If Mass were offered up only in Rome, what a desire we should have to make a pilgrimage to that city! If the body of Christ were consecrated by only one priest, how we should flock to that altar! If the Blessed Sacrament were preserved only at Bethlehem, how our hearts should yearn for that sanctuary!

Many people miss Mass through over-sleeping. Every priest is well aware of that. Those people do not mean wilfully to sin, but when aroused on Sunday morning, they turn over for "a wink more," and the result is, they take a wink too many. The author of the Book of Proverbs had such people in mind when he wrote: "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou rise out of thy sleep? Thou wilt sleep a little, thou wilt slumber a little, thou wilt fold thy hands a little to sleep." This sluggishness leads to sloth, and sloth paves the way to mortal sin. Have a fixed hour for rising on Sunday morning, an hour that will give you sufficient time to get to Mass. You may sleep afterwards, if you will.

The Queen of Sheba came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Despite her rank, she sat meekly at his feet, and listened to him, treasuring up every word he said. But what was Solomon in comparison with our Lord? A wise king indeed, but only a man, and

a sinful man. Why, we are even in doubt about his salvation.

From the queen of the South learn ye a lesson; be imitators of her humility; come with meekness to the court of your king, even if that court be only a humble parish church. If love of Christ will not bring you to Mass, let the fear of His wrath impel you to come. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. That fear will guide you to love. And the man who came to Mass to drag through a listless half-hour, will, in God's good time, remain to pray.

Al
300