

THE
SEVEN
LAST WORDS



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By Thy precious Blood, which burst from Thy hands and feet on Calvary.

By Thy precious Blood, which from the Cross cried to Thy Father for pardon for us.

By Thy precious Blood, which after death came forth from Thy Sacred Heart.

By Thy precious Blood, still offered daily on our altars.

By Thy precious blood, of which we drink in Holy communion, and of which Thou hast said, "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath everlasting life."

Tract. (Isaias V.:4.)

My people what have I done to thee, in what have I aggrieved thee? Answer Me. What more ought I have done for My vineyard and have not done? See if there be sorrow like unto My sorrow.

People, By Thy most bitter death, dear Lord, deliver us.

Priest, We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee.

People, Because by Thy Holy Cross Thou has redeemed the world.

Prayer

Divine Jesus, incarnate Son of God, Who for our salvation, didst vouchsafe to be born in a stable; to pass Thy life in poverty, trials and misery, and to die amid the sufferings of the Cross, I entreat Thee, say to Thy divine Father at the hour of my death: FATHER FORGIVE HIM; say to Thy beloved Mother: BEHOLD THY SON: say to my soul: THIS DAY THOU SHALT BE WITH ME IN PARADISE. My God, my God, forsake me not in that hour. I THIRST, yes, my God, my soul thirsteth after Thee, who art the fountain of living waters. My life passeth like a shadow; yet a little while and all will be consummated. Wherefore, my adorable Saviour, from this moment, for all eternity, Into Thy Hands I Commend My Spirit. Lord Jesus, receive my soul. Amen

THE PROMISE OF OUR LORD

(Zach. xii)

(Be Seated)

I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, *the spirit of Grace and prayers*, and they shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for an only son, and they shall grieve over Him as the manner is to grieve for the death of the first-born. And they shall say to Him, What are these wounds in the midst of Thy hands? And He shall say, With these I was wounded in the house of them that loved Me.

(Kneel)

Behold O good and most sweet Jesus, we cast ourselves upon our knees in Thy sight, and with the most fervent desire of our souls we pray and beseech Thee that Thou wouldst impress upon our hearts lively sentiments of faith, hope and charity, with true repentance for our sins, and a most firm desire of amendment, whilst with deep affection and grief of soul we ponder within ourselves, and in spirit contemplate, during these three hours. Thy five most precious wounds; having before our eyes that which David spake of Thee, O good Jesus, in prophecy; "They have dug My hands and feet; They have numbered all my bones." (Psalm xxi.: 17.) Amen.

(Let us Pray)

Spare, O Lord, spare Thy people. Help us, O Lord God our Saviour, and for the glory of Thy name, O Lord deliver us, and be propitious to our sins for Thy name's sake. For we have sinned, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and revolted, we have gone aside from Thy commandments and Thy judgments, we have not hearkened to Thy servants, the prophets, who have spoken in Thy name. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face; but to Thee, the Lord our God, mercy and forgiveness; for we have departed from Thee, and by reason of our sins Thy people are a reproach to all that are round about us. Incline, O my God, Thine ears and hear: open Thy eyes and see our desolation: for it is not for our merits that we present our prayers before Thy face, but

for the multitude of Thy tender mercies. O Lord hear, O Lord be appeased; hearken and do; delay not, for Thy own sake, O my God. For Thy name is invoked upon Thy people. Amen.

FIRST WORD

(Kneel)

The executioners lead Jesus to the spot where the Cross is lying on the ground. Like a Lamb destined for a holocaust, He lays Himself on the wood that is to serve as the altar. They violently stretch His hands and feet to the places marked for them, and fasten them with nails to the wood. Mary hears the strokes of the hammer, and every blow wounds her heart. Magdalene's grief is intensified by her inability of helping her tortured Master. Jesus is heard to speak His first word on Calvary:

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” (St. Luke xxii,: 34.)

PAUSE FOR SHORT REFLECTION

(Be Seated)

On the Cross we see Man triumphant over sin; beneath the Cross sin triumphing over man.

The multitude look up with heated passions and angry faces, urged on in their blindness to do and say many things of which in calmer moments they would be ashamed. They look up into the Face of the dying Christ. Then they seemed the conquerors, He the conquered; yet time has proved how contrary appearances are to the facts. In truth He was the Victor, they the victims. The mob beneath the Cross are not their own masters; they are impelled by the hidden enemy, the strong oppressor of mankind, sin. Why should they hate One so loving? Why should they kill Him who went about doing good? They have lost all self-control, and, inflamed with anger and cruelty, and urged on by their leaders, they are ready for anything: hating their best Friend and killing the Lord of Life.

Above, on the Cross, Christ looks down upon them,—calm, patient, self-possessed. His eyes are undimmed by worldly ambition or selfishness or passion. Below, the storm is raging, and men have become

men's faith in god and in man. Amid constant misrepresentation and the rejection of proffered aid, He remains unchanged. How often do we lose all heart, grow hard and cynical, and lose our faith in God's goodness through the difficulties we meet with trying to work for God. Life so often hardens us. But it only manifested in Him, more and more, His loving trust.

Let us then triumph through faith, not expecting that god will interfere in any miraculous way to protect us or to enable us to succeed in life.

Success and triumph over difficulties are not what God asks of us. The truest success is that inward keeping of our own souls faithful to God. What a triumph is that,—when all the world is against us, telling us God has forsaken us, when we see in outward things no token of God's acceptance—to be able to look up to heaven and say: “Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.”

Such is the triumph of the Cross: triumph over sin by endurance. Looking at the great enemy as he draws near to try Him, and saying: “Do thy worst, thou canst not touch My life,” and bracing Himself to bear: content to endure death itself rather than swerve from the will of God.

(Kneel)

(Let us pray)

O Lord Jesus Christ, crucified for us, humble but with great confidence we beseech Thee to be merciful to us all here gathered round Thy Cross, and to all for whom we wish to pray, especially for all to whom we are much indebted; for all ever intrusted to our care, that they may have a happy death. Grant us the grace to know Thee, to love Thee, and to be truly sorry that till now we have known and loved Thee so little.

We ask this grace by Thy precious Blood.

By Thy precious Blood, which bathed Thy Sacred Body, and trickled down to the ground in the Garden of Olives.

By Thy precious Blood, which gushed from Thy Sacred Body during the scourging.

By Thy precious Blood, which covered Thy sacred face when Thou wast crowned with thorns.

His first utterance in the glow of His early youth before His heart had been saddened by the sins and hardness of men, was “Knew ye not that I must be about My Father’s business?” This was the thought with which He started in life, and now after all these years of trial and sorrow, in which God never interfered to lighten His burden or to remove opposition, or to make life easier, He dies with the same simple filial trust in God, “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit!”

His thought of God has never changed. His trust has never faltered through His life. He never swerved in His loyalty. He was tried, indeed, as none ever was before. So strangely did God deal with Him that many could not believe Him to be the well-beloved Son. Satan even would suggest the doubt that God could leave His only son, apparently to starve in the wilderness, “If Thou be the Son of God!”

There was so little appearance of any divine manifestation about Him that the people called Him the Carpenter’s Son, and the thieves on the Cross cry out in mockery, “If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us.”

Yes, to all appearance God had left Him to live His life, and will not interfere with its outward orderings, as He will not with any of ours. The work that He came to do is not made easy for Him. He has to meet opposition, prejudice, misrepresentation, hatred. He tried to help, but the people reject His offer. He tries to teach, but they do not want to learn, and perverting His words, try to catch Him in His talk. At last the crowds leave Him; He cannot teach, because they will no longer listen. Their opposition takes a more definite form, the nation turns against Him. They arrest Him, and decree His death. Still God will do nothing. They bind Him and scourge Him, they dress Him in scarlet, mock Him and spit at Him, but God is silent. They nail Him to the Cross and leave Him to die, and God will not stretch out His hand to save Him.

Earth has cast Him out, the Jewish church has rejected Him, and God will not say a word to vindicate Him. And now as He breathes out His soul in death, in spite of all that seems to us so strange, so hard to be understood, we see the same tender, trustful love for His Father: “Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.”

It is the triumph of trustful love over all the difficulties of life, its failures and its sorrows, and the peculiar kind of trials that are apt to shake

like beasts; the face of Christ looks down, strong, gentle, and pure, like a beacon light through a blinding tempest. His words are uttered through the cries that rend the air, in a voice that vibrates with sympathy and love—“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” In these words He hurls back the foul stream of wickedness that was hurled against Him, and uses man’s sins as a means of blessing.

Sin, that has infuriated and blinded the people below, gathers all its strength to assault Him. Can He keep His soul in peace amidst such manifestations of unkindness? Can He love where all is hate? Can He preserve His self-control in such blinding agony, under such humiliation, such grief? Sin rises up and tries Him, spreads as a dark cloud over His eyes, pressed as a dead weight upon His heart, struggles with Him, throws itself as a mist around Him, to penetrate and stain Him. One word, and it is enough; nay, one inarticulate cry of irritation; nay, even one frown of impatience, and Christ has ceased to be our Model. Sin has conquered. One word! Can He bear it, all in silence? Does He not hear or heed? No man can stand against the whole world, and not feel it. At last His lips are open, He will speak. Will He curse that nation that was not worth His love? Is sin conqueror? “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” He takes the very wickedness that tries Him, and turns it into a blessing. No, verily, sin has no power over Him. It may test and try, but it cannot stain. All that man did against Him in hate He has by His love turned into the means of saving man, and He has conquered simply by enduring.

We cannot help the badness of others, we cannot change the world, but we can use others’ sins for our own good, and for their good. We all desire to change the world, and we feel if the world were better, we should be. But here Christ teaches us that the world is to be bettered by our endurance of the evil that is in it. It was the sins of the world that showed our Saviour’s love. It is in the way we endure what sin puts upon us that we show our true character.

“They know not what they do.” They are blinded by passion – they cannot see. I know, I can see things in their truth. They have their way, they think they have conquered. But in truth they are conquered; I am free.

(kneel)
(Let us Pray)

O Lord Jesus Christ crucified for us, humbly but with great confidence we beseech Thee to be merciful to all here gathered round Thy Cross, and to all those for whom we wish to pray, especially for those in the state of sin. Grant us the grace to know Thee, to love Thee, and to be truly sorry that till now we have known and loved Thee so little.

We ask it of Thee by Thy Holy Name of Jesus.

By Thy sweet Name Jesus, which Thy Father gave Thee,

By Thy sweet Name Jesus, which Thou didst accept so gladly as an engagement: –

To suffer all for us,

To pay all for us,

To forgive all our sins,

To forget them all,

To grant every blessing to all who pray to Thee.

By Thy sweet Name Jesus,

Which touched the heart of Thy Heavenly Father.

Which has closed Hell to us,

Opened Heaven to us,

And brought back hope to many poor sinners,

Which confounds the devils,

Gladdens the angels,

Teaches so many virtues,

And better than all other names expresses

What Thou hast ever been to us,

During Thy mortal life,

On Calvary,

Every day of our lives,

On Thy Altar,

In the Holy Tabernacle,

In the Holy communion;

In our hearts.

And what Thou wilt be to us forever in Heaven.

Prayer

Look down, O Lord from Thy sanctuary, and from Heaven, Thy dwelling place, and behold this holy Victim, which our great High-Priest, Thy Holy Child the Lord Jesus, offers up to Thee for the sins of His brethren and let not Thy wrath be kindled because of the multitude of our transgressions. Behold the voice of the blood of Jesus, our Brother, calls to Thee from the Cross. Give ear, O Lord, be appeased, O Lord, hearken, and tarry not, for Thine own sake, O my God, because Thy name is called upon in behalf of this city and of Thy people; but deal with us according to Thy great mercy. Amen.

That Thou wouldst vouchsafe to defend, pacify, keep, preserve and bless this city.

People, We beseech Thee, hear us.

SEVENTH WORD

(kneel)

Jesus has now but to die. His death is to put the finishing stroke to our redemption, as the Prophets assure us. But He must die like god. This man worn out by suffering, exhausted by His *Three Hours' Agony*, whose few words were scarcely audible to them that stood round His Cross now utters a loud cry, which is heard at a great distance off, and fills the centurion, who commands the guard, with fear and astonishment, it is His Seventh and Last word:

“Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.” St. Luke xxiii.: 46.

PAUSE FOR SHORT REFLECTION

(Be Seated)

This word, too, followed close upon the preceding one, and depends upon it. He who ever loved and sought to obey His Father's will and trust Him to the end, could remain unshaken through all the trials of His life.

was the gratification of every passing desire, others seeking only to avoid what was difficult and to do what was pleasant. Now they are urged on by blind unreasoning hate to crucify the Lord of life, though “they know not what they do.” Sin has blinded their eyes to the true meaning of life. They seem more successful than He whom they have crucified. Yet they have failed utterly.

Here then, on the Cross, we see again sin vanquished by simple faithfulness to one purpose, and that purpose the will of god; triumphing over all difficulties and oppositions, using all circumstances for the one supreme end of life, and, through every difficulty, nay, by means of those difficulties, effecting that which He came to do.

Beneath the Cross, we see sin triumphant. Men shaped and molded by circumstances, tossed on the stormy sea of chance, without the guiding compass of the one true purpose of life, and urged on, blindly and ignorantly, at last to the great sin of the Crucifixion.

(kneel)

(Let us pray)

O Lord Jesus Christ, crucified for us, humbly but with great confidence we beseech Thee to be merciful to all here gathered round Thy Cross, and to all those for whom we wish to pray, especially for those suffering oppression or persecution, that they may be strengthened and comforted. Grant us the grace to know Thee, to love Thee and to be truly sorry that till now we have known and loved Thee so little.

We ask this grace by Thy Sacred Body.

By Thy Sacred Body, born of the Immaculate Virgin Mary and carried in her arms.

By Thy Sacred Body, faint and weary.

By Thy Sacred Body, disfigured and unsightly.

By Thy Sacred Body, all covered with Thy precious blood.

By Thy Sacred Body, hanging on the Cross like one vast wound.

By Thy Sacred Body, cold and stiff in death.

By Thy Sacred Body, offered daily on the altar.

By Thy Sacred Body, always in our holy tabernacles.

Prayer

Look down, we beseech Thee, O Lord, on this, Thy family, for whose sake our Lord Jesus Christ did not hesitate to be delivered into the hands of the persecutors and to endure the torment of the Cross. Who with Thee and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth world without end. Amen.

(To be said aloud by Priest and People together).

Lord Jesus! For Thy sake I believe in Thee

For Thy sake I hope in Thee.

For Thy sake I love Thee.

For Thy sake I grieve that I have sinned against Thee, and have caused others to sin against Thee.

For Thy sake I heartily forgive all who have wronged me, and beg Thy grace and mercy for all whom I have ever wronged.

For Thy sake I wish to love all men; to live in peace and true charity with all, and to help all to work out their eternal salvation.

Amen.

Priest: By Thy Holy Cross and bitter Passion, O Lord.

People: Send help to Thy servants who are sick or near their death.

SECOND WORD

(Kneel)

It is the sixth hour, or, as we call it, midday. The sun withdraws his light, and darkness covers the face of the earth. The stars appear in the heavens, all is silent as death. The thief, whose cross is at the right of Jesus, feels himself touched with repentance and hope. Turning to his companion he upbraids him for having blasphemed Jesus, and then, turning his head toward Our Saviour’s Cross, he thus prays to Him: *Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy Kingdom!* Jesus is pleased to find in this poor criminal the faith He had vainly sought for from Israel: He thus grants his humble prayer; It is His Second Word on the Cross:

“Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.” St. Luke xxiii.: 39.

PAUSE FOR SHORT REFLECTION

(Be Seated)

“Then were crucified with Him two thieves: one on the right hand and one on the left.”

The thieves were the victims of their own unbridled covetousness. Covetousness had been yielded to, and had grown stronger and stronger, till it had ruled them. And this was the consequence – everything was taken from them, even life itself, and they were hung naked upon the Cross.

Here was sin triumphant over man, driving him on with its false hopes and lying promises, until at last, having made him its slave, it threw off the mask.

Man’s nature longs to have. Sin comes and makes its offer: “You shall be as gods”; put forth thy hand and take, though God may have forbidden it. With every fresh gain, nature cried out for more and more. The passion for gain grew stronger, until life itself was risked for the hope of gaining. The passion for possession ended in slavery, beggary and death. Yet the longing to have is a true element in man’s nature. In itself it is not wrong. If guided by Divine Wisdom, which shows us what is worth getting and directs us as to the method, it is a means of spiritual progress.

Between the two victims of this misused power hung Jesus our Model: He, “who being rich, became poor for our sakes,” that He might make us rich with the riches of God. Now, to all outward appearances, He is as poor as they. They passed through life grasping at everything their hands could take, and ended it having nothing. He passed through life the Lord of all, deliberately setting aside even what He has a right to.

He came to point men to the true riches, to give them a discerning spirit, which could detect what was worth having, what was worthless, and to teach them the laws of possession.

Then Jesus speaks. He has been looking upon these poor victims of passion and sin. He has been silent, patient, and calmly strong. What can it mean? What is the secret that upholds Him in so strange a contrast to them, in their fever of disappointment?

disclosed a peculiar view of man’s life on earth—that is was the fulfilment of a plan already laid out—the carrying out of the will of God. His first utterance at twelve years old showed this, “Knew ye not that I must be about My Father’s business?” He spoke of the complete satisfaction of His being in carrying out this plan, “My meat and drink is to do the will of Him that sent Me.”

Now, on His death-bed, He looks back over His life. Has it been a success? Has He been able to carry out the plan?

To all appearances, indeed, His life was a failure, and He was now being slain by a gross act of injustice, acknowledged even by the Judge who condemned Him. Pilate said: “I am innocent of the blood of this just Man.” It seemed as though He was cut off before His time, not by the will of God, but by the sin of man.

His teaching had been ridiculed, His miracles attributed to the power of the Devil. The rulers in Church and State declared against Him, opposed Him in every way and tried to destroy His influence with the people, and now they condemn Him to death as a blasphemer. Yet he says: “It is finished, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.”

No power on earth nor in hell could prevent Him from doing the work God gave Him to do. All things and persons, consciously, ministered to that end. Pilate, in condemning Him, acted solely for his own end, to keep his place. Yet our Lord said, “the power against Him was given from above.” Judas betrayed Him to get the money he needed, yet he was unconsciously fulfilling prophecy thereby. When Annas out of envy counseled His death, he prophesied, “It is expedient that one man die for the people.”

Though they knew it not, His bitterest enemies helped Him to carry out His Father’s will. There was but one way in which the will of His Father could have failed, and that was by His own will refusing to obey. But this could not be, for the fulfilling of it was the joy and aim of His life.

We turn our eyes to the multitude beneath the Cross—men who had their own plans in life, or whose lives were aimless—some struggling into positions of prominence, others living as though the purpose of life

didst look down, from the Tree of the Cross, upon Thy sorrowing and afflicted Mother.

3. ab Lord Jesus Christ, my crucified Saviour, Son of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, open Thy Sacred Lips and speak to me, as Thou didst to St. John, when Thou gavest him as a Son to Thy beloved Mother.
4. ab Lord Jesus Christ, my crucified Saviour, Son of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, open Thine Arms and embrace me, as Thou didst open them on the Tree of the Cross, to embrace the whole human race.
5. ab Lord Jesus Christ, my crucified Saviour, Son of the most blessed Virgin Mary, open Thy Heart and accept mine, and graciously hear my prayer, if such be the pleasure of Thy most holy will.

SIXTH WORD

(kneel)

The moment is at length come when Jesus is to yield up His Soul to His Father. He has fulfilled every single prophecy that has been foretold of Him, even that receiving vinegar when parched with thirst. He has now but to abandon Himself to death. His head bends forward, His eyes begin to close and His lips become cold and livid. But, that He might show the world that He died because He was pleased so to do, in order to teach us to die well, after having taught us to live well; at the moment when men lose their speech, He, the God-Man, lifts up His head, opens His eyes, and fixing them on Heaven, speaks thus: it is His Sixth Word:

“It is Consummated.” St. John xiv.: 29,30.

PAUSE FOR SHORT REFLECTION

(Be Seated)

It is the last word but one, that last look from a death-bed over a life that has almost drawn to an end. From first to last our Lord

He is no poorer now than He ever was. He is as rich now as He always was. The true riches are His. The things of earth would never satisfy Him, and He would never take them. He set them all aside, from first to last. He is as strong, as rich, as self-possessed at the approach of death as He was when they sought to make Him a king and He refused.

What can He have to say to a thief whose whole life was guided by the principle against which His was one constant protest?

This He can say: “You and I have that desire in common. I long to have, as truly as you do. I do not blame you for that; but you have directed that longing towards objects not worth possessing. There is one thing you might have which death could not rob you of.” So, by His example and bearing, He directs that longing in one of the thieves towards its true object. “Lord,” at last he cries, “remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom.” Jesus answered, “This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.”

(Kneel)

(Let us Pray)

O Lord Jesus Christ, crucified for us, humbly but with great confidence we beseech Thee to be merciful to us all here gathered round Thy cross, and to all those for whom we wish to pray, especially for all whose death is near. Grant us the grace to know Thee, to love Thee, and to be truly sorry that till now we have known and loved Thee so little.

We ask this grace by Thy holy Hands.

By those Hands, so often raised to Thy Heavenly Father to implore our pardon; and so often lowered to lift us up.

By those Hands, so often placed on our wounds to cure them.

By those Hands, so often stretched out to protect and bless us, and receive us back to peace and love.

By those Hands, pierced and fastened to the Cross for us, and still bearing the marks of their Wounds.

And we ask it by Thy sacred Feet.

By those Feet, so often wearied and torn in following after us.

By those Feet, which have so often stopped to wait for us.

By those Feet, which never broke the bruised reed nor quenched the smoking flax,

By those Feet, which have ever been the refuge of sinners and mourners.

By those Feet, at which penitent Magdalene found so tender a reception, peace for the heart, victory over her passions, pardon for her sins, true happiness, and her faithful, ardent, and unwavering love.

By those sacred Feet, which were pierced on the Cross and still bear the adorable wounds to plead for us.

Prayer

O my Lord Jesus Christ, Who, to redeem the world, didst vouchsafe to be born amongst men, to be circumcised, to be rejected and persecuted by the Jews, to be betrayed by the traitor, Judas, with a kiss, and as a lamb, gentle and innocent, to be bound with cords and dragged in scorn before the tribunals of Annas, Caiphas, Pilate and Herod; Who didst suffer Thyself to be accused by false witnesses, to be torn by the scourge and overwhelmed with opprobrium, to be spit upon, to be crowned with thorns, buffeted, struck with a reed, blindfolded, stripped of Thy garments, to be nailed to the Cross, and raised on it between two thieves, to be given gall and vinegar to drink and to be pierced with a lance: do Thou, O Lord, by Thy most sacred pains, which I, all unworthy, call to mind, and by Thy Holy Cross and death, save me from the pains of hell and vouchsafe to bring me whither Thou didst bring the good thief who was crucified with Thee; who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THIRD WORD

(kneel)

Mary draws near to the Cross whereon hangs her divine Son. The thick darkness has dispersed the crowd. All is silent and the soldiers can find no reason for keeping the afflicted mother from approaching

made that great choice, is ready, amidst the pains of the Cross, and the thirst of body, of mind and heart, to hold fast to the end. Then “they that have suffered with Him shall also reign with Him.”

(kneel)

(Let us pray)

O Lord Jesus Christ, crucified for us, humbly but with great confidence we beseech Thee to be merciful to all here gathered round Thy Cross, and to all those for whom we wish to pray, especially for the poor, for all suffering great want and for those we have neglected to help. Grant us the grace to know Thee, to love Thee, and to be truly sorry that till now we have known and loved Thee so little.

We ask this grace by Thy Sacred Lips that said, “Come to me all ye that labor.”

That said, “The Son of Man came not to destroy sinners, but to save them.”

That said, “It is I; fear ye not:” “Ask and it shall be given to you.”

By those Sacred Lips that said—

To the paralytic, “Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee.”

To the widow, “Weep not.”

To the leper, “I will, be thou made clean.”

To Magdalene, “Go in peace.”

By those Sacred Lips, that said from the Cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

By those Sacred Lips, parched by a cruel thirst, that said to the good thief, “This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.”

THE THREE HOURS’ DEVOTION

Prayer of St. Pius V

1. Lord Jesus Christ, my crucified Saviour, Son of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, open Thine Ear and listen to me, as Thou didst listen to Thy Eternal Father on Mount Tabor.

2. O Lord Jesus Christ, my crucified Saviour, Son of the most blessed Virgin Mary, open thine eyes and look down upon me, as Thou

other part. We must take our choice. If we give to the lower nature all that it demands, the higher nature will starve. If we feed the longings of the higher nature, the lower must be mortified. God will then become so necessary to the soul that every cloud which for a moment comes between it and God calls out the cry of agony, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?”

Thus we see the close connection between these two words. Our Lord, while offering up the great Sacrifice for the world’s redemption, was not so elated in spirit as to be above feeling the ordinary bodily wants of man. Some of the martyrs seem to have died at the stake, or on the rack, in such spiritual ecstasy that they were apparently unconscious of any bodily pain. Not so with the Captain of our Salvation, the King of all the martyrs. He comes, as it were, nearer to our level than they. The great Example for all men must, in a sense, be more like all men. He must not be an exception to the ordinary life of man. Therefore He shows us that His body felt and longed for the alleviations for pain, but He endured.

To feel the needs of our nature is no sin. To be intensely sensitive to pain, to thirst naturally for the love of others, to be alive to the pleasures of beauty, and the good things of life, all this is not sin. Blessed is he who directs all these natural cravings upwards, into that one deep longing, “My soul is a-thirst for God.”

Beneath the Cross, we see the lower nature triumphant. Men ready to feed every passion to satisfy every demand of their body or of their corrupt will. From that crowd there is no cry, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?”— no sense of alienation from God, and therefore no cry of the mortified and unsatisfied nature, “I thirst.” They are full and satisfied, and the spiritual nature is numbed and paralyzed.

Beneath the Cross we see sin triumphant, satisfying men for the moment by holding the cup ever ready to their lips, while their eternal needs are lost sight of.

On the Cross we see sin vanquished, vanquished with no flush of victory, or consciousness of strength, but by endurance.

“I had rather be an abject in the house of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners.” Happy is the man who, having

her Son. Jesus looks with tenderest affection upon Mary; the sight of her sorrow is a new grief to His Sacred Heart. He is dying, and His mother cannot console or embrace Him. Magdalene, too, is there, distracted with grief. Those feet, which a few days before she had anointed with her most precious perfumes, are now pierced through with nails, and the blood is clotting round the wounds. John is there, too, overwhelmed with sorrow. The silence is again broken. Jesus speaks to His Mother and to the beloved disciple; It is His Third Word:

“*Woman, behold Thy Son.*” After that, He saith to the disciple: “*Behold thy Mother.*” St John xix, :26, 27.

PAUSE FOR SHORT REFLECTION

(Be Seated)

“There stood by the Cross of Jesus His Mother and the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

Temptation assaults some men in its grosser and more degrading forms; others it attacks in more subtle and hidden ways. The great struggle of some men’s lives is with their lower passions—temptations that seem in themselves to degrade. Others are tempted in more dangerous, because more specious ways. Selfishness we all know to be sinful, but there are temptations that come to us in the form of unselfishness. Worldliness in its more open forms cannot be doubted, but temptations may clothe themselves in the garments of unworldliness. There is no part of our nature through which temptation may not approach us, or which may not be enlisted on the side of sin to drag us down. Our purest and noblest affections may become to us instruments of temptation.

Here our Lord shows us how to meet these more refined and dangerous forms of temptation. Beneath the Cross stood His Blessed Mother, looking up at her dying Son. She was henceforth alone in the world. In one sense, He could save Himself. As He said, He might ask His Father, and He would give Him presently more than ten legions of angels. He had forbidden His disciples to fight for Him. He had commanded Peter to put up his sword into the sheath. Yes, He might,

at any moment, startle the soldiers by doing what they called upon Him in derision to do, by coming down from the Cross. And there, in the person of His Blessed Mother, stood, as it were, all the dumb appeal of His dearest earthly affections calling upon Him to save her breaking heart. She does not ask Him, indeed, but her presence is a cry to His filial love to spare her. What a strong appeal, what a subtle temptation! The demands of a mother's love; of a man's duty on the one hand, and, on the other, the call to fulfill the will of God. It was that same dying Christ, who had said: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." Now He has to prove the force of these words in His own life. Earthly love, in one form or another, had come between man and God, and in the manner of love, man sinned. Sin had triumphed over man, dragging him down through the noblest part of his nature. Christ must triumph over sin in that same part. Here He takes love in its very purest and noblest form, and shows how it can be used as a temptation, and that love is not wounded, but purified and uplifted, when its demands are resisted, because they are opposed to the will of God.

True, indeed, filial obedience is one of the highest duties. A man's love for his mother is the purest and noblest affection; but obedience to the will of God comes first.

Here, then, is Christ triumphing over and atoning for all those sins to which man has yielded in the name of his affections. As He turns His dying eyes upon His Mother, there come before His mind the thirty years at Nazareth, those years of constant and closest intercourse. All the sanctity of that holiest of homes undisturbed, unmarred by sin, and then the call to leave it. First, three years ago when He went forth to preach. And then, day by day, drawing Him nearer and nearer to that inevitable moment which had now come. But, as the separation is necessary, He will do all He can to alleviate her pain. "Woman, Behold thy Son!" He giveth her His own beloved disciple in His place and that disciple takes her to his own home.

It is the triumph over sin, by enduring the consequences of sin. We cannot live in the world as if there were no sin in it. Sin has severed the bond of affection and relationship. Perhaps not our own sin, but the presence of sin in the world. Sin is a principle of separation. We feel how things ought to be and are indignant at their displacement, yet the

Prayer

Lord God almighty, I beseech thee, by the precious blood which Thy Divine Son shed on this day upon the wood of the Cross, deliver the souls in Purgatory, and especially those souls for whom I am bound most to pray, that through the devout prayers of thy servants here gathered around Thy Cross to commemorate Thy three hours of agony, they may obtain what remission of pain which they have ever desired: Who livest and reignest world without end.

People. Amen.

FIFTH WORD

(kneel)

There was but one detail of prophecy which was as yet unfulfilled; years before, the Royal psalmist had said: "And they gave me gall for my food; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." (Ps. lxxvii.: 22.) Well He knew that in answer to His words one of the soldiers would present to His parched and dying lips a sponge full of vinegar and hyssop, and that this would be all refreshment He would receive from that earth on which He daily pours forth a heavenly dew, and to which He has given overflowing fountains and rivers. But He came to fulfill *all* and do a perfect work, and He breaks that awful silence by that word so expressive of suffering: it is His Fifth Word:

"I Thirst." St. John xix, : 23.

PAUSE FOR SHORT REFLECTION

(*Be Seated*)

This word followed probably close upon the last. In the spiritual life they cannot be separated. One will ever follow close upon the other. The thirst of the lower nature is a condition of the longing of the higher nature after God.

Our being is not in that perfect balance in which God originally created it. Now "the flesh lusteth against the spirit." One part of our nature cries for its own immediate gratification, heedless of the needs of the

the need of God's presence, and the pain of its loss, are we true to God. In proportion as we find ourselves able to live without God, to secure our happiness in other things, have we failed.

Beneath the Cross, then, we see sin triumphant, man separated from god, and unconscious of his loss. There is no cry of complaint, no sense of His need. On the Cross we see man triumphant over sin, unable to endure the sense of separation.

If God is nothing to us, if we sin on and do not care, if we are not distressed at the thought of being separated from God, we are with the multitude, to whom "He was without beauty or comeliness, despised and the most abject of men." In proportion as we do feel the fear of separation and the dread lest we do not love Him, so far are we with Christ the conqueror, crying out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

(kneel)

(Let us pray)

O Lord Jesus Christ, crucified for us, humbly but with great confidence we beseech Thee to be merciful to all here gathered round Thy Cross, and to all those for whom we wish to pray, especially for the POOR SUFFERING SOULS, and for all much tried by temptation. Grant us the grace to know Thee, to love Thee, and to be truly sorry that till now we have known and loved Thee so little.

Tract. (Psalm xxi)

O, God, my God look upon me. Why hast Thou forsaken me? O my God, I shall cry by day, and Thou wilt not hear. In Thee have our Fathers hoped: they have hoped and Thou hast delivered them.

People. Lord Jesus, remember Thy servants departed. May eternal light shine upon them.

triumph is by enduring not by resisting. True love ought to bind together but, in a sinful world this may not always be possible. We may have duties to perform which command us to depart from those we love most dearly and have we not the promise of the Cross? "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all things to Myself. But no man hath left houses or wife, or children, for My name's sake, but he shall receive a hundred fold in this life."

In Christ's parting from His Mother there is nothing of the stoic; no hardness. All the tenderness of human pity and of a breaking heart is shown. He does all He can short of disobeying the will of God. He thinks not of His own grief, His absolute solitude, but of hers; and gives up His last friend to comfort her. "Woman, Behold thy son!" "Behold thy Mother!"

(kneel)

(Let us pray)

O Lord Jesus Christ, crucified for us, humbly but with great confidence we beseech Thee to be merciful to all here gathered round Thy Cross, and to all those for whom we wish to pray, especially for our parents, children, relatives and friends. Grant us the grace to know Thee, to love Thee, and to be truly sorry that till now we have known and loved Thee so little.

We ask this grace by Thy Holy Mother Mary.

By Thy Immaculate Mother, in whom there is no sin.

By Thy Mother, who bore Thee in her womb.

By Thy thoughtful Mother, who kept in her heart all that concerned Thee.

By Thy Mother, who shared every joy and every sorrow of Thy life and death.

To our Lady of Sorrows

Mary most holy, Mother of Sorrows, by that intense martyrdom which Thou didst suffer at the foot of the Cross, during the three hours of Jesus' agony: deign to aid us all, children of thy sorrows, in our last agony, that, by thy prayers, we, from our bed of death, may pass to Heaven's holy joys.

Prayer

O God, who for our salvation hast, in the most bitter death of Thy Son, made for us both an example and a refuge: grant, we beseech Thee, that, in the last peril, at the hour of our death, we may be made worthy to experience the effect of His great charity, and to be made partakers of His glory: through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

FOURTH WORD

(kneel)

It is close upon the ninth hour—the third hour after midday—the one fixed by the eternal decree of God for the death of the Man-God. The feeling of abandonment which had caused our Redeemer to suffer an Agony in the Garden, now returns. He has taken upon Himself the sins of mankind; the whole weight of God's justice now presses on His soul. The bitter chalice of God's anger, which He is drinking to the very dregs, extorts from His lips the plaintive cry: it is His Fourth Word:

“My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” St. Matt. Xxvii. 45, 46, St. Mark xv.,: 33, 34.

PAUSE FOR SHORT REFLECTION

(Be Seated)

From such a word it would seem as if it made little matter whether one tried to do right or not. All appear to be under the same sentence. God seems to treat all alike. There is that God-forsaken multitude, once guided by the Pillar of Light through the wilderness, illuminated by the gift of a special revelation; instructed by the teachings of prophecy; yet now turning their backs upon the light, forsaking and forsaken by God, putting to death “Him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write.” There, hard by, lay the doomed city that knew not the day of its visitation. The Shekinah was withdrawn, the voice of Prophecy had been silent for four hundred years. But here upon the Cross is One whose whole life has been an act of obedience, “whose meat and drink was to do the will of Him who sent Him, “”who came into the world to

give testimony to the truth,” and He cries out: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

Are all then, good and evil, treated indiscriminately by God under the one sentence of judgment? Jesus, the all-holy, nay, the co-equal Son of the Father, did indeed in that moment experience, so far as it was possible, the loss of the sense of God's loving protection. He shut out from Himself the light that ever shone upon His human soul. He could not be separated from God, for He was God. He had no personality but the personality of the eternal Word, but He would feel as nearly as it was possible the separation which sin effects between God and man.

True then, the multitude below the Cross, and Jesus on the Cross, are all enduring the penalty of the sentence, “Sin separates from God.” But what a difference! No cry of despair or agony rises from the multitude. They are under the penalty in all its fulness, and they seem unconscious of it. In their blindness they are doing what they could not do if their eyes were open. Forsaken by God, “they walk on still in darkness, and all their ways are out of course.” But, worst of all, they do not seem conscious of their loss or their need. Ah, no! The silence of the multitude, God-forsaken as they are, is the greatest witness of their woeful state. We turn to Jesus. He could not sin Himself. “He was the holy, innocent, undefiled One,” yet being the great representative Man, the second Adam, the Atoner, He must bear the pain of sin. He must experience, so far as possible for Him, that sense of separation. And what then? It is unendurable. He cannot bear it, with a loud voice He cries out.

What a contrast! What the multitudes are suffering in an infinitely greater degree, an absolute separation from God, they bear with the utmost equanimity, and are, in fact, unconscious that they are suffering at all. When Jesus experiences the first approach of that dark shadow across His human soul, it is more than He can endure. He cannot remain silent in His pain.

Truly that cry was rather the cry of victory than of defeat. To be unable to endure the sense of separation from God is the lot of those to whom God is all in all, who can cry in truth, “What have I in heaven, and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth?” In proportion as we feel