

## **DAY 19.**

### *Mary, the Mother of Sorrows, followed her sorrowing Son.*

WHILE these things were being done, Mary, God's most sorrowful Mother, eagerly sought to see her Son, that she might receive from Him at least one word of comfort, or might herself comfort Him in some way, and bid Him a last farewell. But, because she was not allowed to go near Him, because of the crowd of wicked soldiers, who surrounded Him on every side, and followed Him, she went round by another way, as some affirm, so as to get before the crowd, and thus meet her Beloved Son. For although from her bitter grief for her Son's Passion, she was utterly exhausted, and without strength, yet her mighty and burning love for Him, and her great desire of seeing Him, gave her fresh strength, so that she passed before the whole crowd of those who were leading Jesus. Who, I ask, can conceive what must have been the agony of sorrow which then pierced her heart, when she saw her heart's only joy, Whom she embraced with love beyond all comprehension, so miserably forsaken, and bent down besides, beneath the heavy burden of the Cross; when she looked, too, on His gracious face, that so often she had kissed with inward devotion, so shamefully disfigured, and miserably treated; when she beheld His worshipful Head, that she had times without number pressed with reverence and burning love to her heart, so cruelly pierced by the dreadful crown of thorns; when she saw such wrong and contempt inflicted on her God and Lord, and Himself numbered with condemned thieves? Who can doubt that the sword of sorrow most sharply pierced her devout and tender heart, when she saw her Beloved Son, Whom she had carried on her breast, so foul with blood and spittle, so buffeted and smitten, so disfigured, as well as despised and cast off by the whole world? There is no doubt at all, that if she had not been kept and strengthened by God's goodness, her heart would have broken for sorrow, for the measureless force of sorrow had so weighed down her spirit, that she stood as if overwhelmed by some heavy rock, and could not utter even a word. Yet she manifested no unusual

disfigurement, nor showed outwardly any sign of impatience; for she had resigned herself utterly to God, and had poured and brought back her whole being, without any choice or will of her own, into His most gracious will. And because she was full of the Holy Ghost, she had known from the prophets that her Son was to die, and that it was for this that He had taken a mortal body, and that so it had seemed good to His Heavenly Father. Therefore it was that she knew not how to desire anything else. Hence, even as Christ Jesus gladly offered Himself to the Father a living Victim for the salvation of men, so also the most blessed Virgin Mary offered her own Son for the salvation of the human race; and it was far more pleasing to her to be deprived of His consolation, than to hinder man's redemption. But her burning love for her Son could not keep itself wholly within, but as it inwardly burned, consumed, and melted her heart, so also it outwardly poured forth bitter tears, and darkened her fresh color, and pressed out numberless deep sighs, so that her outward, pitiable, and most sad appearance, showed forth the inward anguish of her spirit. But because she understood that it was God's will that she should suffer together with her Son, she gladly offered herself for this, for she was ready, indeed, to die with her sweet Son Jesus, for the salvation and redemption of wretched men. Moreover, she kept back her sorrow within the secret places of her heart, because she desired no outward comfort from men, seeking rather to abide in that sorrow, until our Lord Himself delivered her and consoled her.

For this reason she followed Jesus, that with Him she might carry her cross. For this she went up to Calvary, that with Him she might be crucified inwardly in spirit. For this she stood by the Cross, that the sword of sorrow might pierce her Heart, and make her the Queen of all martyrs. For the most excellent gift of God, by which He is accustomed to reward His friends, is the cross, together with affliction, and this gift He bestowed on His Son and the Blessed Virgin, and still bestows on all His chosen friends. Hence, whoever sets himself against the cross and afflictions, resists God's will and God's gifts, and wanders away from God, and turns his back upon Him. For with a common love God loves all men, and desires them to advance towards perfection; but this cannot be without labor,

and sorrow, and many crosses: just as some precious and cunningly worked vase of gold cannot be made without fire, and hammers, and other sharp and suitable instruments. Yet wretched men always fly away, nor can they bear or tolerate Christ's gentle workmanship within them, and this is why they always remain fit for nothing, wretched and frail.

Then, when Christ, as we have said, thus walked along pitiably laden with His Cross, and when all His strength was gone, and He was utterly exhausted, so that He could go no further, in His exceeding pain He fell down flat upon the ground. At this fall He felt all at one time the fearful want of mercy shown by those cruel wretches, as they smote, and dragged, and forced Him along, as every man may easily weigh and meditate in his own mind. For they did to Him all the devil inwardly suggested. Moreover, when those wicked and blood-thirsty tyrants saw that neither by striking, nor dragging, nor forcing, nor kicking, they could move Him any farther,—so utterly was He without strength,—they compelled a certain man, going into the city, to carry the Cross after Christ. Now this they did, not from any compassion for Christ, but that they might the more quickly put Him to death; and lest, He might break forth His soul under their hands, before they had put forth all their malice and wickedness against Him. Now this man was a heathen, that thereby might be given to understand that the Jews were unworthy to carry Christ's Cross; and, at the same time, this mystery signified that the faith and glory of the Cross would pass to the Gentiles.