

DAY 4.

*Of the great Sorrow and Anguish which Christ underwent in the Garden,
at the thought of His Passion hanging over Him.*

WHEN Christ had now come into the garden, He began to be sorrowful and afraid, and very heavy; and by reason of the violence of His inward pain, He trembled outwardly in all His members, nor was He ashamed to confess to His disciples this sorrow, and weakness, and trouble of His Body, for He said: "My Soul is sorrowful even unto death."

Let us also go and see what is the cause of so great a sorrow. And, indeed, for many reasons Christ was so sad; but we will here only touch on two reasons, which may forcibly stir us up more to compassion and love.

The first reason was, because of our many and grievous sins, and obstinate malice, and great ingratitude, and because we were so utterly devoid of all holy fear. For on account of these things Jesus was sorrowful. For we both read, and know by experience, that if God were to permit a man to see his own sins, as He Himself sees them, straightaway his heart would break for exceeding great sorrow; or he would lose his senses, when he sees how he had wronged, and despised, and Yought lightly of his Maker and Redeemer, his God and Lord, and how basely and unworthily he had deformed his own beautiful and noble soul. In truth, Christ took all the sins of the world upon Himself, and of His own will He allowed sorrow of heart for these sins to come upon Him, even as if He Himself had committed them. And because of His divine wisdom, which saw all things, He sees all sins, especially those that were most hateful, that ever have been, or ever will be; and, at the same time, He sees the contempt and wrong which they inflicted on His Father. Who then can, in any way,

understand how great must have been His grief and sorrow? For He was ever urged on to promote His Father's honor with His whole strength; nor did He thirst after anything, save His Father's glory and the salvation of souls.

Amongst the Jews, indeed, it was a custom, that if they heard God blasphemed or wronged, they rent their garments as a sign of grief, in order to show thereby that they sought after God's honor. Now, if the Jews, false hypocrites as they were, did this, how much must Christ, the true Son of God, have sorrowed, when He saw all the wrong and contempt which were daily inflicted on His Father Who is in heaven? For, alas! even now it is easy enough to see, how, day by day, men think nothing at all about offending God by deadly sin. For this reason, therefore, Christ took upon Himself grief and sorrow, even so far as He could, still remaining alive. Yet, not as the Jews did He rend His garments as a proof of His bitter sorrow, but He rent asunder His own Body, so that a sweat of blood broke forth from all His members, by reason of His exceeding great anguish and dread, even as the juice of the grape when in the winepress. And that He might show us how this sorrow was consuming the very inward marrow of His Soul, when He was straightened by this deadly anguish, He said: "My Soul is sorrowful even unto death." Of Phinees, the son of Eleazar, we read in the Bible, that he avenged a wrong done to God. For when he saw a certain Israelite sinning with a Moabite woman, he burned with anger, and thrust both of them through, and for this was beloved by God. In like manner Moses avenged a wrong done to God, thousands being put to death for adoring the golden calf, after which the Lord was appeased. What, then, was the vengeance taken by the Son of God, Jesus Christ, Who was ever consumed by a burning thirst after justice, and Who placed all His zeal in this one thing, namely, that He might increase His Father's glory, and turn aside, and prevent whatever was contrary to His Will,—when He beheld not merely a single sin, but the crimes of the whole world? Who can understand how all His inward parts were shaken with grief, how all His limbs trembled by reason of His burning thirst for justice, how His whole man was moved to avenge the wrong done to His Father? Yet in His anger, He remembered mercy, for He was full, not of truth only, but of grace

and loving-kindness. Therefore He said to His Father: “O My Father, You know that I ever loved You, and done Your most gracious will; You see also that My Heart is just, and how exceedingly I thirst to do Your will, and to avenge the wrong done to You by Adam and his posterity. Yet, as mercy is Mine, and My nature is goodness, and I have come, not to take vengeance, but to reconcile; not to strike, but to heal; not to kill, but to redeem; and as Adam’s sin cannot pass unavenged, I beseech You, Father in heaven, to take vengeance upon Me. I take all the sins of man upon Myself. If this tempest of anger has risen up because of Me, cast Me into the red and bitter sea of My Passion, let Me be swallowed up, and overwhelmed in the abyss of a shameful death, if only Your wrath may pass away, and man’s debt may be justly canceled.”

Thus it was that this innocent Lamb took upon Himself all the sins of the world, and allowed such great vengeance to come upon Him,—yes, so great was the agony which He took upon Him in the garden, that had it been greater, His natural life must have given way. O unspeakable goodness of Christ Jesus! O love beyond our poor understanding! All our sins did He desire to bear, Who alone was without sin. He, Who is the joy of heaven, for our sakes is made sorrowful even unto death; and for our sinful pleasures it was His will to suffer Himself this deadly agony. And because He is the brightness of His Father’s glory, and the Wisdom of God, in Whom the Father’s will is ever reflected as in a most pure mirror, therefore it was that He clearly knew by what works and actions His Father was to be appeased, and by what ransom our debt was to be paid; namely, by bitter sorrow, and humble prayer, and rough penance, and by patient bearing of suffering and affliction. And, at the same time, He left to all men, as His teaching and doctrine, that they also should strive to appease His Father by their works, whenever they may have fallen into sin. For this reason, He wished to be Himself the first of all to appease Him. And, indeed, so great was the sorrow and grief that He took upon Him, that they out-balanced the sins of the whole world, and were not only more than the strength of His Body could bear, but pressed down His Soul even into the straits of death.

Then, falling flat on His Face upon the earth, humbly, and fervently, and with long-suffering, He prayed, and wept bitterly, not tears of water only, but tears of blood; and this in such abundance, that great drops of His Blood fell down upon the ground. And even more than that, they fell from His whole Body, and from every limb, that all His members might share in one common sorrow, and celebrate, as it were, the sad funeral rites for the sins and damnation of the human race, and might show, in very deed, the compassion by which they had been moved, and the love with which they were burning, and how ready they all were to suffer for our sakes; since not even for a little while were they able to put off their affliction, even before they were tortured by the enemy. Burning with love they were beforehand with the enemy, and they began to contend among themselves, and to tremble, and to shed blood, as if they suffered from the enemy's delay.

Oh! who has such a heart of stone as not to turn at the thought of this fiery love of Christ? Who is so ungrateful as not to turn with all his members to his Saviour, Whom he sees engaged in such eager toil, and suffering such cruel agony in the work of our salvation? Who has a heart so perverse, who can be so cold in love as not to strive, according to the poor little measure of his strength, to repay love for love, and sorrow for sorrow, and prayer for prayer, and tears for tears, and resignation for resignation, and offering for offering, and agony for agony, and blood for blood, and death for death, and charity for His burning love? Oh! what can be dearer to a loving and grateful soul in this life, than to repay her lover even one little drop of love, in return for that exceeding bitter chalice, all of which, He, for the love of her and for her salvation, drank even to the dregs? Oh! where is the heart that can understand the compassion and sorrow that Christ felt, when He beheld in the mirror of God's Providence the wretched deformity and misery of His own members and creatures, which He had created in such purity, and nobleness, and holiness, and glory, when He saw what we had lost, and what we had deserved? Alas! how all the bowels of His compassion were then moved! Even as a tender father mourned for the death of his only-begotten son, so did Christ Jesus sorrowed for our wretchedness and unhappiness. Oh! who can contemplate, without compunction and without tears,

this loving Joseph falling on the neck of each of us, and kissing His brethren, weeping, likewise, over each of them, comforting them, and forgiving their sins; even taking all their sins upon Himself, and punishing their crimes in Himself with sorrow of heart, and making the wanderings of each one of them, as it were, His own guilt. Oh! what exceeding great labor did this innocent Lamb undergo, in order to reconcile His Father unto us! Even as a mother brings forth her child into the world with great pain and sorrow, so did Christ make us to be born again to life everlasting with intolerable agony and torment.

O my soul, and all you who love God, come, and let us now follow Christ Jesus with sorrow of heart and inward devotion, and with tears and pity, into the garden. Let us contemplate with the eyes of our heart, Jesus, that is, our Saviour, the Lamb without spot, how He bore therein all our sins; how heavily, all alone, He trod the wine-press, that like the grape that is pressed with all care, He, too, might be pressed in the wine-press of His Passion, and might pour upon us richly, and give us to drink, the red wine of His precious Blood, so as to make us drunk with His love. Let us see, I pray you, how the glory of the angels became sorrowful even unto death, that He might carry us into joy everlasting. For, in order to rescue us from the torments of hell, He bore in Himself all the pains which we had merited; and He, the Lord of might, at Whose look the angels tremble, and every knee is bowed, appeared not as God, but as the poorest, and most abject, and most desolate man, whom the world possessed. See how He lay with His Face upon the ground, in much anguish of spirit, covered with a bloody sweat, forsaken even by His Father as well as by all men. There He lay and prayed, not as God, not as a just man, but, as it were, a public criminal, as some dreadful sinner, as if He were not worthy to be heard by His Father, or, at least, as if He were ashamed to lift up His eyes to heaven. Does it not seem as if He had been cast away by God, and were held to be God's enemy, that we who were truly God's enemies, might be made His friends and elect children? It is written: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Yet see, how our sweet Jesus, of His own free will, gave Himself up into those Hands, and gladly suffered all the wrath, and vengeance, and punishment

of God His Father, which we had deserved, to fall down upon Himself. This is why He suffered Himself to be so cruelly scourged, and reproached, and beaten, and wounded, and, last of all, to be put to a shameful death. Oh, what resignation have we here! What an offering of Himself! What love is this! His disciples were heavy with sleep; He alone remained watching, to pray and labor, and, like a tender and faithful shepherd, to guard His sheep with loving care. More than that, thrice He prayed, before He was comforted. O, may such sorrow, I pray, such faithfulness, such love beyond all bounds, touch these hearts of ours! For it was we that, by our sins, brought this sorrow and cross upon Him. Oh! we have thought so very little of offending the God of glory; yet see, how fearful was the sweat, and the toil, and the sorrow, which Christ had to suffer, in order to be able to reconcile His Father unto us! Dear, indeed, was the ransom which He was forced to pay for our redemption. Let us sorrow, then, I pray, together with our Saviour, in His exceeding bitter sorrow and affliction; let us pray together with Him, and watch and suffer with Him. Let us also do something for the sake of our salvation; when we see how zealously Christ Jesus, in every member of His Body, and in every power of His Soul, is employed about us. And if we cannot shed tears of blood, at least let our eyes rain down tears of water. If we cannot weep with Christ in all our members, at least let our eyes weep. And if we are still so hard, and the vein of tears is so plugged up within us, that not even with our eyes are we able to weep, at least let us desire to weep in our heart. Let us fall down upon our face before Christ.