

## **PRAYER 3.**

### *A devout Exercise on the Passion of our Lord.*

NOW when the time drew near that our Lord Jesus was to pass out of this world to the Father, having Himself made His testament as a most faithful father, and left it to His beloved disciples, that is to say, the best and most excellent good that His fatherly Heart could think of, even His own most sacred Body to be their food, and His precious Blood to be their drink:—and this He did to give them a most sure proof of His burning love, to leave behind Him an everlasting memorial or monument of His Passion and Death, and of all His works, and to deliver to them a signal, and certain and precious pledge of their future glory—when this, I say, had been actually accomplished and ended, and when He had sung a hymn to God the Father, He went forth with His disciples to the Mount of Olives, across the brook Kidron, where was a certain garden, to which often for the sake of prayer He went with His disciples. And He said to them, “Sit here, watch and pray, lest you will enter into temptation.” But He took with Him Peter, and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, the three most secret, faithful, and best loved of His friends, that to those to whom He had shown the glory of His Godhead in His Transfiguration, He might now show the bitterness of His sorrow in His Passion.

Stand here, then, as many as love God, and observe and see all that our Lord had done for our souls. Come here, all you who have been redeemed by the sinless blood of the innocent Lamb, Christ Jesus, that you may see and understand all that He had suffered for our iniquities. Behold! Now the Book of Life is opened, and its seven seals are broken; the book in which truth shone forth, and all the mysteries of wisdom and knowledge are hidden, which is full of doctrine, and overflowed with mysteries. Now is the mirror of all virtues clearly shown to the eyes of all. Now is the old veil rent, and all the wrappings and coverings of figures are taken away. Now is the Holy of Holies thrown

wide open by Jesus the High Priest; for He had offered His own Blood in sacrifice, and revealed all hidden holiness, and all secret sacraments and mysteries.

Now is shown the deep well of the patriarch Jacob, out of which flow rivers of living water, by which not only the Israelites, but even the Samaritans can draw, and refresh their many flocks and herds, and wash away all filth and uncleanness. Here also is seen the bitter and troubled sea of affliction, which, although it was formerly so terrible, that at its very name man stood trembling with fear, yet, now the true Jonas, after that, had obliged Himself be thrown in, had turned it into sweetness, and so quieted and soothed its every tempest, that men can place themselves in it as in a delicious bath, and cleanse themselves in it, nor fear any more, but even glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. And so it is that in our own day we see very many gladly take His cross to themselves, and with great cheerfulness follow their Lord Jesus Christ.

Here also is Jacob's ladder placed before our eyes, the top of which reached not only to heaven, but even to the bosom of God the Father, and by which not the angels only, but the Lord of the angels climbed up, followed by tax collectors and sinners. At the top of this ladder sits the Father of Mercies, with His bosom wide open, lovingly to receive as many as love His Son.

Now also is brought back to our remembrance that marvelous pool at Jerusalem, which beyond measure is moved and troubled by the descent of the great Angel, Christ Jesus, so that not only one sick man, but as many as are ill, and all who are unclean, and whosoever wash in this saving water of sorrow, that is, of His Passion, are healed and cleansed. Now, too, is opened the immense treasury of the rich Master of the household, whereby the poor, and the weak, and all who are heavy laden, may be gladdened with most generous gifts, so that every man may draw from the sacred bowels of Jesus

Christ whatever he knew he is without. For plentiful grace flowed from there; and that it may flow still more plentifully, they have been torn and opened in many places.

Now also is celebrated the glorious victory of Christians, because the true David, Christ Jesus, humble indeed, and small in stature, but mighty in strength, armed not with the armor of Saul, but with a staff, that is, His own Cross, and five pebbles, had fearlessly attacked and battled down the cruel Goliath, the enemy of the people of Israel.

Moreover, here is made known to us a wonderful sacrament, and most high mystery, in that the Lord of the angels had grant to be made an outcast of men; the Most High had become the lowest; the only-begotten of God the Father had freely offered Himself for guilty sinners to die upon the cross, that He may nail sin to the cross, and destroy death, and blot out the hand-writing of our debts in His own precious Blood.

Lastly, the fire which our Father Who is in heaven had sent upon the earth, is so mightily kindled, that the flame reached to heaven, and melted by its intemperate heat the frost-bound earth, and broke through the hard and stony places. Truly, whosoever comes near to this fire by devout meditation, will not be able to escape its heat. For whose's heart, however stony, that will not melt, when it perceives the immense goodness of Christ Jesus, how greatly He longs after us poor worms of earth, how eagerly He had thirst after our salvation, how gladly He had offered Himself to death, how generously He had given His precious Blood, and His young and beautiful Body, and all that He had, that He might redeem us, sinners though we were, from damnation? For it was by no compulsion or force, but by His own free will, that He came to the place known to him who betrayed Him, that He might the more easily be found by him.

Behold, then, O faithful soul, and look upon this bold-hearted David, your God and Lord, how He burned with exceeding great desire to begin the combat, and to lay down His life for His people and the house of Israel. Behold, I pray for you, how, quickened by love, He came first of all to the place of battle to fight for you. Truly, before His enemies had come, He had already exercised His limbs for the fight. And although only by lowliness, and love, and prayer, and long-suffering, He had determined to do battle, before those envious ones had laid their cruel hands upon Him, yet gladly did He take suffering upon Himself when it did come, so that no pain can be likened to His pain.