

DAY 8.

Jesus is led to Annas.

FROM this they now led Him away cruelly bound to Annas. And here who is able to think of all the annoyances, and injuries, and cruelty, and contempt with which they treated Him on the way; how often they struck Him, and vomited out blasphemies against Him, and pulled His sacred beard, and kicked Him, and spat their hateful spittle in that fair face of His, on which the angels desire to look; and how at last they hastened to lead Him as quickly as they could to the chief priest, and after this to deliver Him over to death. No one can think of all they did to Him, for far more than all this they did, since, as it is written, they did with Him what they would.

See now, O my soul, how miserably your Lord and Maker is beset and led off by those wicked and lustful wretches, just as if He had been a thief, or a criminal condemned to death. And yet, during all this persecution He remained patient towards men, most grateful towards His Father. Think, I ask of You, what sort of night, so full of trouble was it, must this have been to Him? O Jesus, King of glory, Who governed the whole world by a word, for no one can resist your power, how lowly, and poor, and weak, and despised, have You become for my sake! Where now are the thousand times ten thousand of those who fall upon their faces before You, and adore, and bless, and praise You, saying without ceasing; "Holy, Holy, Holy!" Truly, O loving Jesus, this is the hour of darkness, the time of sorrow, the night of bitterness. And You entered into this sad and horrible night of Your own free will for my sake. Thus, then, as we have seen, they led Him bound and disfigured to Annas.

Let us now see, but with exceeding compassion, how humbly the Lord of power stood there chained and covered with spittle, His eyes cast down, His face covered with virginal shame, waiting with

friendly look to be judged by a vile and puffed up sinner, although no guile had ever been found in His mouth, nor any injustice in His deeds; rather, to Whom, because He was full of grace and truth, all power and all judgment hath been delegated by the Father. And see! How the blood-thirsty high-priest treacherously questioned Him concerning His disciples and His doctrine, in order that from His words he might lay hold of some occasion to condemn Him. But Christ, the Wisdom of God, understanding the high-priest's deceit, was silent as to His disciples for this time, because at this particular time He could not greatly praise them. But with regard to His doctrine, He answered with prudence and wisdom: "I spoke openly before the world, I was daily teaching in the synagogue and in the temple, where all the Jews meet. Why do you ask Me? Ask them, who heard what I said; ask your servants whom you have sent to take Me; behold! they know what I have said." In truth, He who speaks thus is the Eternal Truth, Whose words are so just and true, that even His enemies bear witness to them. And when He had said this, one of the servants standing by, a wicked man and of bold front, gave Jesus a horrible blow, saying: "Will You answer the high-priest?" Meekly did this gentle Lamb receive that blow, nor did His face contract with wrinkles, nor burn with anger, nor did He loosen His tongue to make reproach, nor did He stretch forth His hand to avenge Himself, but He meekly answered, and said: "If I have spoken ill, bear witness to the ill, but if well, why do you smite Me?" O Jesus, gentlest Lamb, who can call to mind without tears your exceeding loving-kindness, and patience, in that You sufferest that fair face of Your, on which the angels desire to look, to be so cruelly smitten by a vile wretch? And you, O my soul, how proud, how impatient, and severe, and rude and greedy of revenge you are, you who by one word are disturbed and offended, nor ever think of the mighty wrong the Son of God underwent for your sake. Let His Passion be the mirror of your life, follow His blessed footsteps and His conversation, learn of Him, how He is meek and humble of heart. Offer Him at least one little drop of sorrow in return for the large and bitter chalice which He drank to the very last drop for your salvation; show Him some little compassion for all His labor and sorrow; give Him at least patience for patience, suffer contempt for contempt; forgive your neighbor, even as God daily forgive your many wanderings, although often you offended Him, and so forgive,

as not the less to protect you, and show you His friendship and loving-kindness. Contemplate the whole of Christ's Passion, even to His last breath, and never once You will find Him to have been moved in any way against His enemies, although they afflicted Him so sorely, or ever to have shown forth the least contempt for them either in word, or look, or deed. Rather, You will find that He showed them all loving kindness and sweetness, so that, if possible, He might soften and turn their hearts. For so loving, so sweet is our Lord, that He knew not how to show His enemies anything but love and friendship. He had a kiss for him who betrayed Him, and sought to take Him, He healed the ear of one of the high-priest's servants, when it had been cut off; He prayed for them who crucified Him; actually, His Heart was wounded with greater agony by their sins and hardness of heart, than by the outward pain which He bore in His body.

We, therefore, if we wish to please Christ, ought to cast away far from us all bitterness, and hatred, and the clouds of passion, and to rejoice when any adversity crosses our path. For that sweet Bridegroom came to look for a sweet bride, who might be free from guile, and like Himself in condition. Hence, in the Canticle of Canticles He called His bride a dove.

Moreover, Peter also followed his Lord, but when He was charged with being of the number of Christ's disciples, he denied Him thrice. Thus Christ, moved by mercy, turned the eyes of His grace upon Peter, who, returning to himself, began to think that this had been foretold him by Christ; how, before the cock crowed, he should deny Him thrice. Thus touched with inward sorrow of heart, he went out from the company of sinners, by whom he had been drawn on to his fall and sin, and wept bitterly. Let us also see here, how great was the sorrow which pierced Christ's loving Heart, when He saw the head and the most earnest of His disciples thus miserably overcome, and how, even as powerful Samson of old had lost all his strength through a woman, so now the prince of the apostles, who by a word had been wont to cast out devils, had denied his Master, out of fear of one word from

a woman-servant's mouth. Oh! how the core of His being were moved with compassion and mercy at the weakness and fall of His disciple, and even as some kind father mourn for the death of his only child, so did Christ weep for the inward death of His disciple and member, whose spiritual death-wound touched Him with no less sorrow, than if He had received it Himself. Oh! how quickly He snatched him out of Satan's power, into which he had fallen, and raised him up again by His preventing grace! How quickly did He look upon him with the eyes of His grace, and permitted the rays of divine light to shine into the dark depths of his soul! Hence it happened, that Peter at once returned to himself, and taking himself into the depths of his own heart, acknowledged his fault, and wept bitterly; and straight away at the first touch of grace, turning away from the children of darkness, turned himself to the light that went before him. For although by God's permission he had fallen into weakness, yet he resigned to God, and had utterly denied his own will, and given himself wholly to God; and lately again he had chosen him and embraced him in His Heart, so that in desire and affection nothing could ever separate him from Him. And although afterwards he failed in deed, yet that resolution, that desire was good. For he had said: "Lord, even if all should be scandalized in You, and shall forsake You, yet not I. For I am ready to go with You to prison and to death." No doubt, love and burning desire had raised his courage above its strength, and had so lifted up his heart, that he forgot his own frailty. But temptation changed all this, so that now he humbly cast himself down within himself, and esteemed himself as nothing worth; who so lately had boastingly lifted himself above himself, and being left to himself, learnt also what in that first fervor he had been unable to recognize. For he had offered himself to God, and suffered God to work in him, but that lofty structure which God sought to build up in him, could not be built, except first the weakness of the first foundation were disclosed, and a new foundation deep and low were laid. For immediately as soon as Christ looked upon him, and he received the light of grace in his heart, he followed that light, and accustomed himself to the touch and inspiration of His Spirit, doing what he was admonished by the Spirit to do; to turn away from creatures, and to turn to the light which he felt within him; and by this he was led to the knowledge of himself, and so he wept bitterly. For when he

had trusted himself, and boasted of himself boldly above measure, and the weakness of nature, our Lord left him to himself, that he might recognize his own weakness and powerlessness; and thus at once he fell. For however much we trust in fervor of spirit, to the same extent ought we to fear the frailty of nature. In truth, Saint Peter, as long as he was with his Lord, feared neither death, nor enemies, nor weapons of war, for boldly had he thrown himself upon the enemy, striking at them with his sword. But when his Lord turned away His face from him, he was overthrown and overcome by one woman's word. No doubt this is what David meant when he said: "You turned your face from me, and I was troubled."

O measureless goodness of God, how tenderly did our loving Lord undergo the contempt and shame which He suffered on account of His disciple, in order that the same disciple might learn to know and humble himself? For our Lord already decreed that he was to be the foundation of the Church, and therefore He permitted him to fall into the lowest depth of his nature, where he clearly discovered his own frailty and utter powerlessness; and where he learned not to boast rashly of himself, but humbly to trust in the help of God, as it is written "Be not high-minded, but fear." For all this, because Christ had fore-ordained Peter to be to the house of Israel, a wall and tower that can never be taken, it was altogether necessary, that his foundation should be laid exceeding deep in the virtue of humility, which is itself the foundation of the whole spiritual structure and of every good. It was necessary, too, that the head should feel sick and weak, in order to feel pity upon the weakness of the other members, and to forgive those who sin not seven times, but seventy times seven, and to learn by what he himself suffered, how to have compassion upon all who desire to turn from their sins, and to obtain for them the grace which he himself had received from Christ. And because Peter had resigned himself wholly into God's hands, and his heart and intention were right and true before God, therefore it was that this fall was not unto damnation, but rather a healing medicine, and was a step forward towards God; so that he who had rashly and without caution turned to himself, being now fallen and wounded, might be compelled to forsake himself, and to turn to God. And this is why the

apostle saith: “To them that love God all things work together for good,” both adversity and prosperity, riches and poverty, gain and loss. For they who have renounced their own selves, and suffered themselves to be led by God, to such there can happen nothing ill. For when by God’s permission, any infirmity comes upon them, it is for them the cause and matter of humiliation, and contempt, and of lowly thoughts about themselves, and of turning to God, and of loving God, and of cleaving unto God, and of serving Him more faithfully, and of observing themselves more carefully, and of more diligently watching their own salvation. And whatever from their own defect they lose in mounting up to God, and in working for Him, that they gain once more in coming down into themselves, and in resignation. For the deeper we go down in the knowledge of ourselves, so much the higher we rise in the knowledge of God, in which consists our chief beatitude; just as the deeper the wall below, the higher it is from above. So, too, the more we cast ourselves down, the higher will God exalt us, and the viler we believe ourselves to be, the more shall we magnify God.

Nor can a man worthily honor God, unless he be truly humble; nor is any service pleasing unto God, unless it proceeds from a humble heart; nor is any man so pleasing unto God, as he who is utterly humble. For such men have so lowered themselves, and made themselves of no account in their own eyes, that God, neither by Himself nor by all His gifts, can cause them to be proud of themselves. For the more they are enlightened, and the more gifts and graces they receive from God, so much the more clearly on this very account do they recognise their own vileness, and the more unworthy do they feel themselves to receive any of God’s gifts; and for this reason they marvel that God should bestow to work anything through them. From this then arises in them so great a love, reverence, zeal, and delight towards God, that they know not how in any way to repay His exceeding love and graciousness, or how to do enough for Him. They know, too, that both they themselves, and whatever they are able to do, suffice not for this. Hence it is, after all, but a little thing for them, compared with what they desire to do, that they have given themselves wholly unto Him, Who had first given Himself wholly for them, since they are not ignorant, how all that they can themselves give is far

above what they can give to Him, when compared with all they have received from Him. Nor do they know how enough to praise Him, or to give Him thanks, or to exalt and worthily honor Him, or how enough to despise and to think nothing of their own selves. Whatever they do, they are eager to do more; at all times they have equally the same thirst after His honor, the same joyfulness in doing His will, for their love of God is always asking of them something more. They praise God, indeed, but they fall short in praising Him; and because they fall short in good, they confess that they do wrong even in that which they do well. Hence they blame and despise themselves; yet here again they come short, and so are made nothing in their own eyes. Now in this mounting up to God by praise and reverence, and in this going down into their own selves, they are set on fire with love, and the red marriage garment, the scarlet and purple robe, twice dyed, is woven. This is that ladder, which Jacob saw reaching up into heaven, and the angels ascending and descending thereon; and in truth, as many as have found this way of ascent and descent, rightly and deservedly may be called angels. For, indeed, by means of that mighty wonder which is stirred up within them by the knowledge of God, and by means of that burning love which spring from this knowledge, they have so mounted up on high to God in their affections, as to pass beyond and above, and to forsake all earthly and perishable things, and to have their conversation in heaven, now contemplating God with this illuminated understanding, so far as God Himself wished to be known by them, and as is expedient for them; and now again by the light which they receive from God's shining rays, sinking down into the depths of their own being, and letting themselves fall into their own vileness, where they utterly despise themselves, and hold themselves as less than nothing. And when again they feel the exile of this world, and the frailty of their nature, and the wants of the body, they groan and cry aloud: "Alas! am I still here in my misery?" And they say with the apostle: "Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" O Lord, take my soul out of its prison. I desire to be dissolved and to be forever with You. Even as the heart desires the fountains of living water, so do my soul thirst after You, O God. Oh! when shall I see with my eyes Him Whom I confess with my mouth, Whom I believe in my heart, Whom I thirst after in my affections? When shall I see You face

to face, Whom now I am permitted to see only in a glass, in a dark way. Wherefore let my tears and my groans be my bread day and night, and my consolation; and let my soul look down upon all earthly comforts, until the day comes when it shall be said to me: "Behold here is your God!" Oh! they who ceaselessly fly up on high upon wings like these, even as the chaste and mourning dove, or who mount up by the ladder mentioned before, seeking after the things their soul loves, passing step by step from virtue to virtue even unto God. Oh! surely shall they with Jacob see God leaning over the top of the ladder, as He stretches out His arms to rescue His bride, and say: "Come, My bride, My dove, enter into the joy of My delights, which You have sought after with toil and groans."

Men like these can with confidence mount up to God, because they have laid their foundations deep down in humility, and are led by the Spirit of God, so that they cannot fall as long as the hand of God upholds them. Oh! happy and blessed they, who walk not after the impulse of nature, or their own judgment, but according to God's leading, and suffer themselves obediently to be guided by God's Spirit, and to follow wherever He may have gone before. And now, O my soul, how is it that in your inmost depths you are so busy about other things, and so distracted and restless, that you are unable to notice God's secret inspirations? How rebellious also are you, and given up to your own will, so that very often you cause delay to God's Spirit, and place obstacles in the way of His sweet workings? Saint Peter, at one look from God, was so thoroughly converted to Him, that exceedingly quickly he turned himself from every disturbing and distracting influence to God, so that he was taken back into God's grace, and his sins were forgiven him, and he was established in love.

O most gracious Jesus, how happy are they on whom Your eyes thus fall, whom You thus enlightened with the rays of your divine light, so that they are enabled both to search into the depths of their own soul, and to acknowledge their own sin! How quickly are they converted! How quickly are their cold, hard hearts softened, inflamed, melted with love, and dissolved in tears, so that they

who before could not keep from sin, now cry out in the conversion of their hearts: “Lord, what will You have me to do? Truly it was no marvel that Peter should weep bitterly; but it is indeed a marvel, and a greater marvel, that his heart should not have utterly burst asunder for distress and fear, when his dear Lord caused him to look into the depths of his own soul, and to see his own sins, and to perceive all the contempt and wrong he had brought upon his beloved Master. Oh! that a man could only once thus look into the depths of his own soul!