

DAY 11.

Of the Compassion of the Virgin Mother for her Son.

O BLESSED Mother of God, and ever Virgin Mary, where is the heart that can conceive how heavy must have been the cross and the affliction which you did suffer on that sad night, when your dear Son, the only comfort of your heart, was given into the hands of wicked men, and was forsaken by His own disciples! We may indeed believe, O sweet Mother, since you were full of the Holy Ghost, that you saw in spirit all that sorrow and torment which your only Son underwent on that fearful night. For as for the sake of man's salvation He would not spare His own fair, and young, and blooming Body, but rather deliver it to death, so He spared not that Mother's heart of yours, but allowed it to be pierced by the sword of sorrow. For this reason also, He foretold you all His Passion, that He might make you share in all His merits and afflictions, and that you might cooperate in the work of man's redemption, so that your maternal breasts, filled with all merits, might ever have ready the milk of grace, and pour it forth in all abundance on every one who press them by devout prayer.

O Mary, Mother most sad, how bitter, how sorrowful was that night to you, when Simeon's sword pierced into your heart! How mournful then was the song of your matin-prayers! your hymn was a hymn of woe; instead of jubilee, you uttered groans, and your spirit was full of anguish. Oh! how sad were the words, how pitiable the sighs, yet how fiery, that you did send up to your Father in heaven! With how fervent and devout a heart you prayed to the Father of heaven for your Son, offering and commending Him wholly unto Him. And although in the body you were not near your Son, yet all that you knew for Him to suffer, pierced your heart as much as if you had suffered it in your own body; and your very heart burned within you as in a burning furnace, and melted away, and withered up, for exceeding burning love and the wasting flame of your affection and your cross. Who can

conceive how fiery were your words, how glowing were the sparks which your heart of fire sent up all that night long? Perhaps you uttered some such words as these: 'O Jesus, my Son, my sweet Son Jesus, who have taken You from me? Who has torn a Mother from such a dear pledge of love? Why can't I see you, O desired light of my eyes? Who will give to me, O Jesus, my child, that I may suffer for You, die for you? O Jesus, only comfort of my heart, why did I not go with You to death? Why did I not straightaway follow You, when You went away? O sweet Jesus, dear Son, where are You passing this night? In whose hands are You? What are You now suffering from? Oh! if those raging dogs would only vomit forth their cruelty on me, and let You go your way unhurt! O Jesus, my hope, my nourishment, my sweet delight, why have I not died for You, that I might not now see in You all the sorrow of my heart? For sweeter would it have been to die, than to see You, my sweet and only Son, in such great distress. O my Jesus, my life, my nourishment, the help of my soul, my sweetness and consolation, where now is the promise of Your angel, when he said to me, that I should become your Mother without woe, full of grace, blessed above the rest of women? Truly, I seem to be the most unhappy of all women, whom the world contained; a Mother above all mothers that have been ever found, full of most bitter sorrow My affliction is indeed exceeding great, my heart overflows with bitterness, my spirit faints for anguish, and my sorrow is above woman's sorrow.

These and such like words did Christ's blessed Mother pour forth all that night long, and wore herself away in tears, and sighs, and tender complaints, and lamentations. And just as all that night Christ was never without the cross, so was His sweet Mother never for one moment free from fearful sorrow. O Mary, most faithful Mother, with what courage did you then follow your Son? How has that love, which by its fire had urged your Son, to hasten of His own accord to the place, where the cup of bitterness was waiting for Him, moved you too, to hasten where the sword of grief hung ready sharpened to pierce through your Virgin heart into the inmost recesses of your soul? O glorious Queen of heaven! how sadly were you led along the way by your friends! How did you move them all to tears by that sad voice of yours! Who can conceive how sorrowful your journey was? For the

nearer you came to the city, the deeper were you plunged in your grief. Nor can we doubt, that you continued on this way for a long time, until you came into the presence of your Son, either as He was being led to Herod, or as He was being brought back from Herod to Pilate, or as Pilate was bringing Him forth to the people, saying: "Behold the Man." Who can understand the sorrow that seized you, when you saw that same only Son of yours, so cruelly bound, so wickedly disfigured by blows, and spittle, and blood, that almost He seemed to have lost the form of man? Indeed, it is possible that our loving Lord looked at His sweet Mother as calmly as He could, and spoke by loving look what He could not say in words. But, O gentle Mother, how did your heart then melt away within you, like wax in the heat of the fire? How were you then utterly dissolved in tears? Yet, as these things are not found in the Evangelists, it is not expedient for many to dwell upon them. But the things that have been written here, have been written to excite in us devotion and compassion for the Blessed Virgin. For the rest, each one can and ought to meditate upon them still more thoroughly, and more deeply, in his own heart.