

## **PRAYER 4.**

### *A Prayer and Offering for Sins.*

O MOST gracious God, have mercy upon me! O King of glory, be merciful to me, a sinner! For the sake of Your own goodness, pardon me, for ever having turned my heart away from the right path of Your commandments, and for having followed my own wicked will, when it drew me into sin, and for having cast off and thrust aside Your holy will, that was inviting me to virtue. How, O my God, can I be so blind of heart, as even for a moment to turn away from You, from Whom come all salvation and every good thing, and to turn to that which is earthly, and perishable, and will soon fall away, and from which nothing come to me, but loss, and perdition, and all wretchedness? Oh! how can I take pleasure in anything at all, save in the remembrance of the immense benefits which You have conferred upon me? How can I seek for comfort, or refreshment of mind, in nothing, save in Your most sacred and bitter Passion, and in Your sweet wounds, that are ever dropping down with honey? What can I ever care for, except to please You, and do Your most gracious will, and love You with my whole heart, and, according to the poor little measure of my strength, repay You somewhat for Your labors and pains, and, above all, for Your unutterable love, which You have lavished upon me? O, most gracious Lord, what more could You have done for me, which You have not done? What was the love that overcame Your tender Heart, O most loving Jesus, and caused You to offer Yourself willingly to die for my sins? Why did You so thirst to drink the chalice of Your bitter Passion, that before Your enemies came upon You, You placed upon Your shoulders the too heavy cross, and not only went forth to meet Your enemies, but inwardly crucified Yourself, even unto death, before they reached You, and inflicted upon Yourself inward death through bitter sorrow, long before they inflicted upon You outward death? For the thirst of working out our salvation so burned within You, that You accomplished in Yourself whatever lay within Your power; and did only leave to Your enemies to do what You could not accomplish in Yourself. Ah, Lord, my God, behold I, too,

am not worthy to live, for it was I that brought upon You this most bitter sorrow, when I was not ashamed to commit, for the sake of a little moment's vile pleasure, what You have to wash away in Your precious Blood, and to blot out by Your death! Oh! how grievous are my sins, which called for so great a satisfaction, and so noble a victim.

O most loving Father! how could Your fatherly Heart suffer to not to hear Your only and beloved Son, as He lay with His Face upon the ground, wrestling with You in prayer, and in His exceeding inward anguish sweating even blood? Why were Your deepest fatherly being not moved at the sight of Your beloved Son, to take away from Him that most bitter chalice, as He so humbly prayed of You? What is man, O Father of mercies, that You so loved him, that You are ready to give Jesus, Your most obedient Son, for vile sinners, who have always offended You, and covered You with wrongs and contumely? Do you love us more than Him? He had to die, that we might live; He was sorrowful, that we might rejoice; He was wounded, that we might be healed; He shed His precious Blood, that we might be cleansed. He always sought Your honor: what was pleasing in Your sight, He carefully performed. At all times, and in all ways, He was the expression of all virtue; why, then, were You so cruel towards Him? Why did You deliver Him up for man, who was already damned, and who was still a rebel against You? How has He ever deserved this from You? Or, what did You foresee in man, that You love him so, and are so faithful to him? Truly, the most precious of Your treasures, and the highest and best gift that Your fatherly Heart could give, You gave for man's redemption,—even Jesus, Your beloved Son, the Word of Your Heart, by Which You spoke to us the intention of Your mind, and through Which You made known to us Your love, where with You have loved us with such fatherly tenderness from the beginning.

Oh! how is it that this burning love of Yours did not absorb and melt us in a moment, when we see You attentive to the groans of exiles upon earth, and hearkening to the cry of men who ought to be

prisoners in hell, and yet leaving Your only-begotten One in the anguish of death, sweating great drops of blood, praying to You with His Face upon the ground, watering the very earth with tears of blood, as if in no way He belonged to You? O sweetest Father, why, or for whose sake, have You forsaken Him? Listen, I pray, O tender-hearted Father, to this sorrow of His Heart; look down upon Him as He trembles in His agony; let those bitter groans of His mount up into Your Heart; and His Sweat of Blood, flowing from His whole Body, move You to pity! See how He is bowed down to the ground; listen, at last, to His fervent prayer, for all His members cry out to You for mercy. Grant Him the desire of His Heart, for He has turned wholly to You in perfect resignation, and has poured forth His supplication in truest love. It is not His own comfort that He seeks, but the salvation of His brethren. It is not His own sin for which He grieves, but my iniquities; it is not His own crimes, but mine, for which He mourns; for never even once had He sinned against You, whereas my offenses against You are manifold.

O most merciful Father! by the love and supplicating prayers of Your beloved Son, pardon the wanderings of Your sinful servant. Accept the worthy sacrifice of Your only-begotten Son, and remember not the wrong done to You by Your wicked servant, for far more He had paid You than all my debt. Oh! if You would only weigh together my malice and His goodness, my crimes and the merits of His bitter Passion, surely the latter would outweigh the former. For what wickedness can be so great, as not to be blotted out by such sorrow, such affliction, such obedience, such lowliness, such unconquerable patience, and, above all, such unspeakable love? What crime can be so enormous, as not to be outweighed by Christ's most bitter Death? O heavenly Father, see! I offer You my Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, Your best-loved Son, with great devotion and gratitude, in union with that love, by which You did send Him to me from Your fatherly Heart, in order that He might take my nature, and free me from eternal death. See! I offer You this ineffable sorrow of His, this anguish incomprehensible to us, but known to You alone, which here in the garden He underwent for all my sins, and instead of the sorrow and contrition which by right I ought to feel. Yes, I offer You His

sweat of blood, for the tears which I have not in my eyes, which for hardness of heart I cannot shed. I offer You, also, His most humble and burning prayers for all my lukewarmness, and sloth, and negligence. Lastly, I offer You all His grievous labors, the practice of His virtues, His rough and austere life, and all that He did in His human nature; all the bitter torments which He suffered in His Passion, together with all the praise of the spirits on high, and the merits of all the saints, as a worthy sacrifice to Your eternal honor and glory, for all my sins by which I have ever offended You, and for the virtues which I have neglected to perform, as also for all the living and the dead, for whom You, O my God, wish me to pray, and I am bound to pray; that You may grant to each of them who are still alive, through Your beloved Son, whatever You know to be necessary for them to enable them to serve You in that state to which, by Your merciful loving-kindness, they have been called.

Another cause of Christ's sorrow was, that He foresaw all the fearful and cruel torments which He was now, at this very moment, about to suffer, and this as perfectly as if felt them already present. And because in very truth He was a man able to suffer like other men, of a tender and noble complexion, beyond what any understanding of man can grasp, for this very reason His fear was the more vehement, so that outwardly He trembled in all His limbs, and inwardly was sorrowful even unto death. He had undertaken to redeem man from his damnation, and to pay his whole debt, and therefore His heavenly Father, as a just Judge, entered into strict account with Him, and opened that great and ancient account-book which contains all the debts of men, and in which He clearly saw all the sins of the world. At the same time He showed Him the ancient hand-writing against us, and He laid before His eyes the price beyond all reckoning, the immense sum, by which these debts must be paid, so that our sweet Jesus saw His whole Passion as openly as when He suffered it. Oh! then, what must have been the sorrow, what the anguish, what the fear, which seized upon Christ's tender Heart and all His members?

Here, too, we ought to notice how our Saviour, Christ Jesus, had always lifted Himself up, and stretched Himself forth both in spirit and with His whole strength, to show reverence and honor to His Father. For the Spirit of God had gently embraced His nature with all its powers, and had made them subject to the law, and all the Scriptures which concerned Him, so as to perfect them according to His Father's gracious will. Therefore it was that He offered obediently into the hands of His Father Almighty, His Body and Soul, and whatever He had, desiring that in Him might be accomplished all that had been decreed and fore-ordained by the eternal wisdom of God and the counsel of the Holy Ghost, and in this Spirit He enjoyed both peace and quiet, in that He had resigned Himself simply, without any choosing of this or that, to God the Father. But, on the other hand, looking down on the tenderness of His complexion, and the cruelty of the torments already hanging over Him, He became sorrowful even unto death; and here, so great were His suffering and struggle, that they surpass all human understanding, and by reason of the exceeding inward agony, outwardly He trembled all over. For according to the spirit He desired to die, but all His Flesh shrank from the bitterness of death. His Spirit, indeed, was at peace, being united and subject to God, but His sensible and sensitive nature had so fully drunk in the bitterness of His overhanging Passion, as imaged before His mind, that He was beyond measure troubled and sore afraid.

After this, so fierce grew the struggle, and with such force did He compel His sensitive nature to consent to these horrible sufferings, that from the excessive strain His Blood poured forth like sweat from all His limbs. For by reason of the fervor of His prayer, and of His dread and horror of death, His Blood had flown up to His Heart. Then His strong love driving out all fear, as well as His burning desire to accomplish His Father's will, and of redeeming us, like some hammer or mighty force, struck down and overcome this fear and sensitiveness, and forcibly pressed out the blood which had meanwhile grown heated, so that, from the sudden shock, it burst forth from His open pores, and flowed down mingled with His other sweat. Oh! who can understand the greatness and bitterness of this pain? Oh! by what anguish was the sweet Heart of our Saviour shaken, which,

placed as it were between two pressures, that of fear and of love, was sorely straightened, fear, namely, straightening Him in His lower nature, and love in His higher?

And although fear was strong, yet was it utterly cast out by the mightiness of His love. But oh! the sufferings, the incomprehensible pain which Christ underwent in this wine-press? Oh! how did His material nature compassionate His sensitive nature, when He saw the latter so straightened and oppressed? How faithfully in its great compassion did that higher nature make intercession, even as an advocate, for the lower? “Father,” it said, “if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me:” and then again, as an excellent peace-maker, it added in the spirit, “My Father, if this chalice cannot pass away, except I drink it, Your will be done.” As if He would say: “Now that You have unfolded unto Me the great debt of the human race, and the price by which it must be paid, from which, indeed, all My tender nature, tender above all understanding, shrink in fear and trembling; yet the desire which I have of fulfilling Your will, and of redeeming man, utterly overpowered Me. I accept then the condition, and I approve what You demanded, and see! this red Blood of Mine, just shed, shall be the pledge, that with money of the same kind I will pay the rest of the debt.” O love of Christ Jesus, You are above all comprehension! Who is there that would not be inflamed by such burning love as this? Who is able even to think of the fruit, and usefulness, and salvation, and eternal good, which were born to us when this most saving word was uttered, “Your will be done?” In truth, of all words ever uttered that was the most saving; for by it the Son of God was taken in exchange by His Eternal Father, so that from the moment when it was uttered, our heavenly Father laid aside His ancient enmities, and changed all His wrath into mercy, and took us back into His grace, so that we have become the sons of God, and joint-heirs with Christ of the kingdom of heaven, who before were the children of wrath, and dwellers in darkness. Oh! who can sound the abyss of this love, whereby Christ uttered this word?

He foresaw, indeed, all the torments that hung over Him, even down to the least blow. He beheld, too, how grievously, how cruelly He was to suffer; and more than that, He saw, too, our exceeding great hardness of heart, and ingratitude, and that amongst so many men His precious Blood would have no effect, no fruit; nevertheless, so great was His love for us, that He was ready rather to suffer Himself to be crucified even a thousand times, than allow, so far as lay with Him, even one man to perish.

Come, then, all you who are devoted to Him, and as many as are of good will, and who desire to make progress in virtue. Contemplate here in the garden Him Who is the mirror of all virtue, the very path of perfection. Follow your Lord, walk in the same footsteps in which He has gone before you. Learn here to lay aside your own will, and to do God's will. Learn to overcome and to bring into captivity to the Spirit your sensuality and vicious learnings, which are drawing you away from God, that so, according to St. Paul's advice, you may have all your senses under bridle, and your will obedient to the service of Christ. Learn, here, that in nothing ought you to seek your own selves, but rather God's honor, and your neighbor's salvation. Lastly, learn here not to give in to the desires of nature, or the persuasion of your own wisdom, but rather to those things which God asked and required of you, whatever they may be, whether in acting, or in abstaining from action, or in suffering, or in prosperity, or in adversity; even as Christ did not His own will, but His Father's, although to do this was a trial to His nature, and went against it, and His sensitiveness shrank from it utterly. Far more useful will it be for you to follow Christ and His divine inspirations, than to be wise according to your own conceits and feelings, however grand and good these may seem. For He Who alone was offended, perfectly knew, when you knew it not, in what way He would be appeased and reconciled. Whatever, therefore, He required of you, that give unto Him; wherever He may either lead or draw you, to that place follow Him; yes, not less boldly to the depths of hell, than to the heights of heaven. As He speaks to you, so answer Him; whatever He commands, accomplish without delay; whatever cross He may lay upon you, carry it without murmuring. For the more you

are united to Him, and the more you go out of, and deny yourselves, so much the more will you be lifted up above to Him.

But now, that we have been strengthened for a little while by this little morsel of spiritual teaching, let us turn again to Christ in His affliction, to Christ, I say, still lying upon the ground, as we have seen Him in our meditation, wet with His bloody sweat, and fervently entreating the Father for us. And now, O my soul, look and see how noble and excellent You are, and how great is the price with which You have been bought. See how greatly the only-begotten of God the Father has esteemed You, when for Your sake He delivered Himself to death, and for Your redemption has shed His precious Blood. Observe, I beseech You, what are the pains and the labor by which You have been restored to health and salvation. Yet You consider Yourself so vile, that for the short pleasure of a moment, for some trifling temporal thing, You sell and lose Yourself, whom Christ has redeemed in His own Blood. See how bitter was all His Passion, the mere thought of which caused Him to shed both blood and water.

But now, with melting hearts, let us see how our loving Lord, after this grievous suffering, lifted up His Head from the ground, and rose from prayer. Oh! how sore were all His limbs from the fearful and great agony which He had undergone. How swollen was that fair face of His, after His burning prayer, covered all over, as it was, by His sweat of blood! How inflamed were His eyes by the tears, which still were thickly flowing! Hear how He addressed His disciples, and said, "Sleep on, now, and take your rest." See here the immensity of our Lord's goodness. Not with severity did He rebuke them, but patiently bore with their sloth and weakness. See, too, how the faithful Shepherd watched and prayed for His sheep. Truly, by His own fervor He supplied for their sloth and lethargy. O, the ineffable kindness of Christ Jesus! The Lord watches, while His servants sleep. He alone combated,



so that they may remain unhurt. He exposed Himself to the wolves, that His sheep may escape scatheless from their bite. He did, indeed, love them to the end.

After this He roused them, and said: “Arise, it is enough; behold, he who betrayed Me is at hand.” Think, then, O my soul, that You are now with Christ in the garden, and that He spoke these words to You. Rise, therefore, O my soul, from the sleep of sin, from Your torpid dream of the deceitful pleasures of earth, and from every delight and convenience of nature; and seizing courageously the cross of penance and affliction, follow Christ Your Lord, and with great compassion, devotion, and inward love, look upon the poor disfigured form of Your Saviour, and think how You were the cause of His Passion. Weigh diligently with Yourself, how great must have been the inward anguish of His Soul, by the outward signs of His exceedingly afflicted Body. Then throw Yourself humbly at His Feet, with as much sorrow and compassion as You can obtain from God, and with burning tears and deep heavy sighs, pray to Him.