

PRAYER 9.

A Prayer that we may perfectly follow and love Jesus.

O JESUS my hope, life, nourishment and comfort, You are the light of my heart, joy of my soul, refreshment of my spirit, my health and my rest, what shall I render to You for Your numberless benefits, which You have granted to bestow upon me, Your most unworthy creature! How shall I be able to love You in return for Your immense love, since it is so infinite and overflowing, that all my understanding and all the powers of my soul faint away for very wonder! How can I ever forget You in my heart? How can I ever love to labor, for I have nothing to repay You for Your mighty love, and to satisfy it? For if I spend myself even a thousand times, what am I compared to my Lord? How ever can this marvelous work go out of my memory, that not only You, the Lord of lords, but also the Judge of all creatures, has accepted to become, as it were, the servant of servants, and a guilty and wicked man, and has desired with the criminals to be sentenced to a shameful death? Behold I, a wretched and vile sinner, condemned by my own conscience, desire in the eyes of men to appear just, and to have a zeal for virtue; and if nothing of honor or praise is given to me, if any, on that do I lean with satisfaction. Why is this, O loving Lord, except that I do not seek Your honor and glory with all my strength, and all my power? But why do I not seek Your glory, except that I do not love You with my whole heart? And why do I not love You as much as I ought, except that I still love myself, and have not as yet despised and denied myself? This is why I do not seek You, O my God, with my whole strength, but rather seek myself in many ways. This is why I do not walk in the holy footsteps of Your lowliness, and patience, and obedience, and resignation. But, O most merciful God! have mercy on me, Your most wretched creature, for I confess to You my weakness and perverseness. Help me, O Lord my God, to deny and destroy myself, and so to crucify my pleasure-loving nature, that I may resist sin even unto blood. I cannot do anything without the help of Your grace. And

although my love be not strong as death, so as to be able, like Your holy martyrs, to suffer myself, by the death of my body, Your shameful death, yet will You grant to strengthen my spirit, that in part, and by degrees, I may pay my debt to You, which as a whole, and at once, I cannot pay; and that so much the more I may die to myself for Your honor, in all things that please the senses, and offer obstacles to Your love, as I am the less able to undergo the death of the Cross for Your sake, as You have done for me, and so many martyrs after You have done. And what other reason can there be, O loving God! that I am so frail, and useless, and unstable, and changeable, except that I do not love You, my God, with the whole strength of my heart? Help me, then, that I may love You exceedingly from my inmost heart. Inflame my heart with love of You, wound it with Your love.

I confess, indeed, O gracious God, that You desire to be loved by all men, nor do You refuse Your love to any man, who is fit and able to receive it. I know also, O sweet God, that to all my sins it must be ascribed, that Your love has grown cold within me. For my many faults come in between You and me, and are an obstacle to Your love, so that it cannot have a place in me, and accomplish its gracious work. For Your Holy Spirit, Who is love itself, cannot dwell in a vessel that is unclean, nor in a body subject to sin. O Jesus, You my Savior whom I cannot see, behold, I confess to You, that I am a vessel full of sin and uncleanness; but if You will You can make me clean, for You are that Lamb without spot, Who 'takes away all the-sins of the world, Who was slain for our sins, crucified for our iniquities, and wounded that You might heal our wounds; and You have shed Your sacred Blood, to cleanse us from all stain of sin. Therefore I pray, O most loving Jesus, to wash away in Your purest Blood whatever in me is displeasing to You, or can come between Your naked love and my wretched soul. Oh! take the same, and utterly consume and bring it to nothing in the abyss of Your divine grace, that I may deserve, without anything coming between us, to be taken captive, and bound, and wounded, and swallowed up, and transformed by Your love, so that the old man in me, which is all carnal and earthly, being crucified and dead, the new man may be raised by You, and born out of You; that new man, made according to Your image, that knows not the things of earth,

seeks no fleshly pleasures, but stands ever upright and ready before You Who made it; that new man, that is guiltless of this world's evil and free from it; that new man, in a word, that may continually fix its inward gaze on You its Saviour, Whom it hopes by Your grace to see clearly in a blessed eternity, and in eternal blessedness face to face.