

DAY 27.

Jesus clothed those who had crucified Him.

AFTER this, the executioners who had crucified Christ, and they were four, divided His poor garments amongst them, taking each man his part. But for His tunic, which was seamless, they cast lots. In this is seen Christ's immense humility, that He Who was the Lord of glory should be delivered into the hands of wretches so vile and needy, that with care and exactness they divided amongst them such simple garments, and of such little price. O! how has the loftiness of heaven bowed itself down! O unutterable patience of Christ; Who saw these things done under His eyes, and yet allowed them! In truth this is that innocent Lamb, Who, when He was offered for the sins of the world, opened not His Sacred Mouth against them that mocked Him; and speared and struck Him, but meekly covered His murderers with His own garments. Moreover, the division of His garments into four parts may be taken to represent the diffusion of the faith into the four quarters of the world, so that all might be made glad by the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus, and might have a share in it, and that by believing in Christ, might deserve to be clothed with, and to put on, Christ, even as the sun covered and adorned the earth, and as wood clothed itself with fire. And the seamless tunic, which on this account was not divided, signifies the indissoluble bond of love, and the wedding and no less indivisible garment of charity, which is indeed our chief garment, for it hides all the shame and baseness of sin. This garment is not torn by men, but it is given by lot. Now this declares to us the incomprehensible judgments of God, Who knows who is His, and whom He has chosen, and whom He has not chosen; who are to be clothed, and who are to be sent away in their nakedness. And to His elect, indeed, He gives the garment of charity, by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost.

Moreover, from this we may draw spiritual instruction, that he who would be a true lover and follower of Christ, must be so stripped naked with Christ, and despoiled of all help or support, as not to keep even a thread of anything belonging to him, nor even to have anything to lay his head on. As Isaiah said, he must be purified in the fire of poverty and desolation, even as gold is proved in the fire, and as the grain of wheat is separated by repeated blows and shakings from the chaff. Even so, I say, must such a man be so utterly stripped naked, and unclothed of all spiritual coverings, (which by daily exercise he has put on, as to think them something belonging to him, or that he has acquired them by his own zeal and diligence,) until to himself, and in his own sight, he becomes wholly vile and nothing; and so can serve God with the same peace of mind and without any choice of his own, in want, and desolation, and affliction, as in delight, and consolation, and joy. And these garments, which he deemed his own, and which he thought that he possessed, as it were, by hereditary right, ought, in his eyes, to pass into the hands of others; that is to say, all his pure and religious life, and his spiritual garments, by which he believed himself to be adorned and glorified, ought to be torn to tatters by others, and treated with reproach, and contempt, and shame, and let himself held up as an impostor and a hypocrite, and his whole life judged to be full of deceit and hypocrisy. Thus together with Christ will he be numbered: with the wicked and the transgressors.

It was in this way that the disciples and friends of Christ have suffered persecutions, and all their holiest efforts and works have been held of no account, as a certain one amongst them has said: “I suppose that God has set us apostles the last of all, as it were, appointed to death, for we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men. We are cursed, and blessed; we suffer persecution, and bear it; we are blasphemed, and entreated; we are made as the refuse of the world, the outcast of all things unto this day.” Thus must the noble grain of wheat lie hidden for a little while in the earth, and be worn away by various storms, and die in itself, if it is to bring forth fruit. For it refuses to be an Abel, whom the malice of a Cain do not try. But how blessed a thing is this persecution of Cain, and the trouble which we allow from there! How clearly by this winnowing is the grain separated

from the chaff. How many proud minds remain unknown, as long as they are tried by no temptations or contempt, but which would certainly betray themselves, were they heavily touched. Hence the Prophet said: “Touch the hills and they shall smoke.” And Isaac said to Jacob: “Come near, my son, that I may touch you, and see whether you are indeed my very son Esau, or not.”

But let us go back to the Cross of our Lord, and with great devotion and compassion look upon our Maker and Saviour, hanging so pitifully in agony, without friends, or any thing of His own, or any comfort, forsaken from on high, and from below, racked by pain of every kind within and without, despoiled of all that could soften His pains, while everything happened to Him that could possibly make them greater. Let us look closely, I pray, at this King of ours, so pitiable and forsaken. He wears, indeed, His crown, and He has a royal title, but where are His courtiers? Where is His camp? Where are His palaces? Truly He hangs here under the sky of heaven. Where is His purple? Where are His robes, glittering with gold? Where is His state, as fitting to His royal magnificence? Where, even, are His Body and His Blood? Surely His whole Body is consumed and wasted by the fire of love, as He Himself said: “The zeal of Your house has eaten me up.” His Blood, sinners have drunk. What shall He give us, I ask, Who has nothing left at all:—no, not the least thing, however little, on which He can lean His Head; Who has no roof, no possession, no inheritance, no garments? All, all has been taken away. Nevertheless, let us go up to this mountain of myrrh, and with the mourning turtle, let us fly up to the palm-tree of the Cross, and see if we can find any fruit. In truth, we shall find enough, and more than enough, if our earnestness in searching fails not. He still has a tongue, to utter words of comfort, words of salvation, and instruction. And if that is not enough for us with which the thief was content, let us go up yet a little higher. For He still has His Heart left whole; with that He will pray to His Father for us. He still has consciousness, full of devotion, grace, and love. He will give us to drink of that wine, which He gave to His beloved disciple, who lay upon His breast. And if even this do not satisfy us, see! He will gladly suffer His side to be transfixed, and His Heart to be pierced, and opened, and in the love of His burning Heart, He will give us His Blood to

drink,—sweet draught, indeed, and pleasant exceedingly, for it is the draught of the love of God. Lastly, He will give us even His holy Soul, full of grace and merits, and adorned with all virtue. What more can we ask of our sweet God and Lord? Behold, He gives all that He has, all that He is; all that He can give. Then let us, too, give Him our whole selves in return.