

DAY 36.

“Father, into Your hands I commend my Spirit.”

AGAIN our Lord Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying: “Father, into Your hands I commend My Spirit.” O all you who love our Lord Jesus Christ, come, I pray, and let us watch with all devotion and compassion His passing away. Let us see what must have been His sorrow, and anguish, and torment, and oppression, when His most noble Soul was now at last compelled to pass away out of His worthy and most sacred Body, in which for thirty and three years it rested so sweetly, and peacefully, and joyfully, and holily, even as two lovers on one bed. How hard it was for them to be torn away one from the other, between whom no discord had ever arisen, no strife, no quarrel, no treachery. Oh! how grievous and unutterable was that Cross, when His holy Body was forced to lay aside so faithful a friend, so gentle a householder, so loving a teacher and master; and how great was the sorrow with which, in like manner, His noble and pure Soul was torn away from so faithful a servant, whose service had ever been obediently rendered, who had never spared any trouble, and shrunk from neither cold, nor heat, nor hunger, nor thirst; and who had ever suffered both labor and sorrow in gentleness and patience. Oh! how great, how immense was this cross and affliction! For, as the philosopher said: “Of all terrible things death is the most terrible, by reason of the natural and mutual affection, which is exceeding great, between soul and body. How much greater, then, must have been the agony and the sorrow, when Christ’s most holy Soul and Body were torn asunder, between which there had ever been such marvelous concord, such wonderful love? With inward compassion, then, and anxious sorrow, let us meditate upon this pitiable separation; for Christ’s Death is our life.

Let us contemplate with all devotion, how that sacred Body of His, the instrument of our salvation, was plunged in agony, when all His veins were now dried up, and had nothing more by which to nourish themselves, and when all His nerves were contracted, and all His members, as if to bid a last farewell, were bowing themselves down to die with unutterable pressure. Ah! who can look without compunction, and sorrow, and compassion, upon Christ's most gracious face, and see how it is changed into the paleness and image of death; how His eyes grow dim, yet still shed tears; how His sacred Head is bowed; how all His members show forth to us, by signs and movements, the love which they could no longer show by deeds. Let us have compassion for Him, I pray, for He is our flesh and blood, and it is our sins, not His, for which He is shamefully put to death. O all you who have passed by the Cross of Jesus with lukewarm or cold hearts, and whom all these horrible torments and pitiable tears, and His warm Blood poured forth like water, been unable to soften; let, at least, this sharp and loud voice, and this terrible cry of His, rend and pierce your hearts through and through. The voice which has shaken the heavens and the earth and hell with fear, which has rent the rocks, which has opened the ancient tombs, and raised the dead, let this voice soften your hearts of stone, and uncover the old sepulchers of your conscience, full of dead men's bones, that is, of vicious actions, and call again your departed spirits into life. For this is that voice which of old cried out: "Adam, where are you? What have you done?" This is that voice which brought forth Lazarus from hell, saying: "Lazarus, come forth; arise from the tomb of sin, and allow yourself to be loosened from your grave-clothes." In truth, it was not so much the cruelty of His pains, as the greatness of our sins, that made our Lord break forth into this cry. He cried also, to show that with Him was the empire over death and life, over the living and the dead. For, although He was all exhausted, and devoid of strength, and beyond the power of man had endured so long the bitter pains of death, yet He restrained death from putting forth its power against Him, until it pleased Him.

He cried with a loud voice, in order to make earthly men, who seek nothing but the earth, shake with fear and trembling, and cause them to meditate and see how naked and helpless the Lord of lords

passed away out of this life. He cried with a terrible voice, in order to stir up all those who live in luxury, and who have grown old in their filth, and who, like dead dogs, send forth a foul stink, and, like the beasts of the field, have grown rotten in their own dung, so that, at some time or other, these wretched ones may rise from their lusts, and desires, and voluptuousness, and the delights of the senses, and see how the Son of God, Who never contracted even the least stain of filth, went forth to His Father; and with what labor, and pain, and agony, He departed from the light of day, and what anguish and unutterable affliction He had to undergo before He reached His Father's kingdom. And yet these men, by obeying the pleasures of their flesh, and loosening the reins to the affections and desires of nature, think that they will be amongst the blessed, and will mount up to heaven. Our Lord also cried with a loud voice, that He might inflame the slothful and lukewarm to devotion and love.

Moreover, He cried with a loud voice, as a sign of this glorious victory which He had obtained, when, having entered into single combat with His cruel and strong adversary, and having come down into the arena and battle-field of this world, He had put him to flight upon Mount Calvary, and stripped him of all his spoils, and left him naked. This victory, I say, and glorious triumph, Christ proclaimed with a loud voice, as a sign of triumph, and thus departing from the place of combat victorious and triumphant, and gathering together the whole army of His merits, He departed to the place of all delights, even the Heart and Bosom of God His Father, commending both Himself and all His own, as to a sure refuge, and saying: "Father, into Your hands I commend My Spirit."

From these words we may gather that the Eternal Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, had been let down like a fishing hook, or ample net, by the Father of heaven, into the great sea of this world, to catch not fish, but men. Moreover, God let down this net on the right hand, where He knew it would enclose a vast multitude. Hear how He said: "My Word, that goes forth out of My mouth, shall not return to Me empty, but He shall do whatever I will, and He shall prosper amongst those to whom I

have sent Him.” And this net is drawn by the Father out of the salt sea, to the quiet shore of His Fatherly Heart, full of elect men, of works of charity, of penance, patience, humility, obedience, spiritual exercises, merits, and virtues. For Christ drew into Himself all the afflictions and virtuous works of all the good: even as St. Paul said: “I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me;” in like manner, Christ lives in all the good, who are dead to this world, and who have submitted themselves as obedient instruments in Christ’s hands. In these, I say, Christ lives, suffers, and works. For whatever good there is in all men, is all the work of God.

Christ, then, feeling His Father draw Him, gathered together in Himself, after a certain marvelous manner, all the elect with all their works, and commended them to His Father, saying: “Father, these are Yours; these are the spoils which I have obtained as Conqueror by the sword of the Cross; these are the vessels which I have bought with My precious Blood; these are the fruits of My labors. Keep them in Your name, whom You have given Me. I ask not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from evil.”

Thus, then, Christ commended Himself with all of His into His Father’s hands. Come, therefore, O faithful and devout soul, and watch with exceeding earnestness the going in and the going out of your Lord Jesus; follow Him lovingly and longingly, even to the chamber and bed of delights, which He has made ready for you in His Father’s Heart. O happy he, who could now be dissolved with Christ, and die with the thief, and hear from our Lord’s lips that word full of comfort: “Today you shall be with Me in paradise.” And although this is not given to us, yet whatever we can here obtain by labors, and watchings, and fasts, and prayers, let us commend all this with Christ unto the Father; let us pour it back again into the fountain, from which it came forth to us; and let nothing at all remain to us of vain complacency; nothing be left to us among men, by seeking any praise, or honor, or reward. But whatever our God has granted to work in us, let us give it back again into His hands, and say:

“Of our own selves we are nothing. He made us, and not we ourselves. All good things have been made by Him, and without Him nothing was made. When, therefore, He takes away with Him what He made Himself, we are simply nothing.” Lastly, Christ commended His Soul into His Father’s hands, to show us how the souls of holy and good men now mount up after Him to the bosom of the Eternal Father, souls who before this must all have gone down into hell; for it is He Himself Who has opened for us the way of life, and it is His sacred Soul which, by rendering the journey safe and secure, has been our guide into the kingdom of heaven.