

## **DAY 30.**

### *Jesus addressed His sorrow-stricken Mother.*

THERE stood also by the Cross of Jesus His most holy and ever-Virgin Mother Mary, not, indeed, that His pains might be lightened and moderated, but that they might be increased in no small measure. For if any creature could have brought comfort to our Lord as He hung upon the Cross, none would have been so fitted for this as His most blessed Mother. But because it had been decreed that Christ should die the bitterest of deaths, and close His Passion without out any consolation or relief, but with true resignation, His Mother's presence brought no comfort with it, but rather added to His pain, for her pains were joined to His, and thus He drew from there still more abundant matter for cruel suffering.

Who then, O good Jesus, can find out by meditation how great was Your inward grief, when, for You know the hearts of all, You saw all the depth and members of Your holy Mother racked by inward compassion in like manner with You upon the Cross, and fastened there by nails, and her tender Heart, and true Mother's breast, pierced with the sword of sharp sorrow, her face deadly pale, while it told of all the anguish of her soul, and herself near dead, without being able to die. When You saw her burning tears, flowing down abundantly like sweet rivers upon her gracious cheeks, over her whole face, as so many witnesses to You that she shared in Your sorrow and love; when You heard, too, her pitiable groans, pressed out from her under her weight of woe; when, moreover, You beheld that same tender Mother, wholly melted away by the heat of love, utterly dissolved in tears, her strength utterly failing her, exhausted and worn by the torment of Your Passion, which wasted her away; Oh! truly, all this was a new affliction to You on Your Cross, and itself a new cross. For You alone, by the lance of Your compassion, has searched into the weight and grievousness of her woes,

which to all men are simply beyond all understanding. And this, indeed, greatly added to the pain of Your Passion, because not only in Your Body, but also in Your Mother's Heart You were crucified, for her cross was Your Cross, and Yours was hers.

Oh! how bitter, sweet Jesus, was Your Passion! Your outward pain was indeed great, but far more grievous was Your inward pain, which Your Heart conceived at Your Mother's anguish and distress. Now it was, it is clear, that the sword of sorrow pierced her through and through, for the Queen of martyrs was fearfully and mortally wounded in that part which is impassible, that is, in her soul; and she bore the death of the Cross in that which could not die, suffering all the more her grievous inward death, as outward death departed farther from her. Who, O most loving Mother, can tell, or worthily conceive in mind, the immense sorrows of your soul, or your inward woe? For Him Whom without pain you brought forth, as the blessed Mother, free from the curse of our first mother Eve, and who, instead of the pains of troublesome labor, were filled with jubilee of spirit, and who for your refreshment caught with your ears the sweet melody of the angels, as they praised your Son, even Him has you now seen killed before your eyes with such exceeding cruelty and tyranny. How manifold was that sorrow of yours, which at His birth you happily escaped, when you saw your blessed and only Son hanging in such fearful pain upon the Cross, before that cruel and raging crowd, who heaped upon Him all the insults, and afflictions, and shame that they could think of in their minds; when you saw Him Whom you carried in your chaste womb without any burden, so inhumanly stretched upon the Cross, and pierced with nails; when you saw His sacred arms, with which He had so often lovingly clasped you, stretched out so that they could not move, covered all over with red Blood, His adorable Head also pierced with sharp thorns, and His whole Body but one streaming wound; and all the while it was not given to you to wipe those wounds of His, or anoint them. What must have been your sorrow, when you saw Him, Whom, times without number, you have laid on your virgin bosom, that He might take His rest, now without even the smallest thing on which to lean His sacred Head; and Him Whom you had fostered with the milk of your holy breasts,

now tormented with vinegar and gall. Oh! how that Mother's heart of yours was pressed in the press of the Passion, when you beheld with your chaste eyes His fair face so pitiably disfigured, so that there was no beauty on it, and nothing where by He could be distinguished. How did the wave of affliction, O sweet Mother, beat against, and flow over your soul and utterly overwhelm it! Truly, if even a devout man cannot, without unutterable sorrow and compassion, turn over in his mind the Passion of Your Son, what must have been your cross, your affliction, who was His Mother, and saw it with your own eyes? If, to many of the friends of God, and to many who love God, Your Son's Passion is as great a pain as if they themselves suffered it; and if these, by inward compassion, are crucified with your Son, how fearfully, even unto death, must you have been inwardly crucified, when not only you weighed with yourself and search into your Son's outward and inward pains in your most devout heart, but saw them even with your bodily eyes? For what is any man's love for your Son compared with your love? Never did any mother so love her child as you loved your Son. And if St. Paul, who loved so much, could say out of his burning love and deep compassion for your Son: "I am fastened with Christ upon the Cross, and I bear about the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body," how much more were you crucified together with Him, and inwardly received all His wounds, being made, in some sort of way, an image and likeness of your Crucified Son?

If, moreover, they who fervently love God, so earnestly seek and thirst after His glory, that as often as they perceive that God is offended, or any wrong is done Him, they are afflicted with as great inward grief, and are tormented with as great pain, as if they themselves had received some deadly wound; how exceedingly then must you, the most faithful of all mothers, and who loved God most fervently, have been afflicted, when you saw your dearest and only Son, no, your God and Lord, so shamefully blasphemed, despised, and mocked? If, lastly, those Jewish deceivers and hypocrites, when they heard any blasphemy, rent their garments, as if in proof of their sorrow, how must your tender heart have been rent for sorrow, when you both saw and heard all those accursed and horrible wrongs, and reproaches, and blasphemies darted forth against your Son? For thus said the Lord:

“Rend your hearts, and not your garments.” And, indeed, on this very day, your brave heart was pierced, not once only, but more than a hundred times. For no trouble came upon your Son in your sight, which did not pierce Your heart.

And how could you stand? For the Evangelist said: “There stood by the Cross of Jesus, His Mother.” Where did your strength come from? Certainly, your body was not of steel or stone, that this day you could be pierced so many times by the sword of sorrow, and crucified so many times, and wounded together with your Son, nevertheless you stood there firm both in body and soul. Perhaps those strong and rough nails held you also fast upon the Cross of your Son, so that you could not fall. But far more strongly did your mighty love, love stronger than death itself, bear you up, so that you could not fall. You stood, therefore, the immovable column of the faith, the lioness that has never been conquered, and that feared no attack or threat when her little ones had been taken from her. You had no fear for the fury of the Jews, the neighing of the horses, the noise of arms, for you were ready to die with your Son. Nor could you deny Him, as Peter had done, or fly, like the other apostles, or doubt, like the disciples, or suffer any scandal, like not a few, for you knew well Whom you have conceived, and brought forth, and how.

Therefore you stood by His Cross, and adored His Godhead in spirit. Truly you stood like some strong tower, in which the king, who had set forth on a long journey, had hidden the precious treasure of faith. You stood, I say, by the tree of the Cross, in order to cooperate by your bitter pain in man’s redemption, by looking on the fruit of life; even in the past as Eve had brought death on man, by standing with pleasure by the tree, and looking at its fruit of death. And, because all grief and compassion that spring from love are great according to the measure of love, therefore, because your love was beyond all measure, your grief was utterly measureless. And because you knew Jesus, your beloved Son, to be the true Son of God, your love for His Godhead, and your love for His Manhood,

like two mighty rocks, pressed together your heart between them, and straightened it in mortal agony, when you saw Jesus, the Son of God, Whom you have conceived in your chaste womb, treated so horribly and shamefully in His Human nature, and so cruelly put to death. Truly, these were the two sharp swords that cruelly pierced your soul with all affliction and grief. For, as a bride full of burning love, you had bitter grief for the grievous contempt and wrong which you saw inflicted on your Bridegroom, even your God and Lord; and, as a faithful and true Mother, you did sorrow exceedingly, in like manner, for the horrible pains and most shameful death which you beheld your sweet Son undergo. Moreover, because the Passion of this your Son was so exceeding great, that according to the rigor of justice it might outweigh by its own weight all the sins of the world, which are numberless and boundless, therefore was your suffering also measureless and boundless; and because your sorrow corresponded with His torments, on that account was your cross and affliction beyond all comprehension and measure, and your merits limitless. Again, as it had been decreed by God that the most blessed Virgin Mary was to stand between God and sinful man as a reconciler, for this very reason He Himself permitted her to suffer a great sickness and sorrow of soul, that the merits of her affliction might be as great as those of one who stood between God and man ought to be, and that they might suffice for all men, who might thus draw help from the measureless treasury of her merits. It was fitting, too, that this same holy Virgin, our Lady, whom God Almighty wished to be the Mother of the children of grace, should perform as sad funeral rites of her Son, as all the children of grace taken together could possibly, or ought rightly and deservedly to perform.

So great, then, was her cross, so mighty her affliction, that although she might have found some little comfort in her Son's Passion, in order to relieve her sorrow, yet was this straight away swallowed up by the force of the flood of bitterness, even as a drop of sweet wine would be lost in the salt sea. Here, then, were to be seen two altars, made ready for the Father of heaven; one in the Body of Christ, the other the Heart of the Virgin Mother. Christ, indeed, offered His Flesh and Blood, Mary her soul. And, surely, that sweet Mother desired to mingle her blood with that of her Son, so that,

together with Him, the work of man's redemption might be accomplished. But it was the privilege of the High Priest alone, to enter with blood into the Holy of holies. Therefore, although the Blessed Virgin could not accomplish her sacrifice by shedding her blood outwardly for God, nevertheless inwardly she burnt and consumed all in the glowing fire of love and sorrow. And, truly, she did offer to God a pleasing sacrifice, even as the Prophet said, "a broken heart, and afflicted spirit," or, as the text has it, "a troubled spirit;" and in place of blood she shed forth tears, and her sighs were borne, like clouds of sweet incense, up to heaven. In this way she performed and offered her sacrifice for all the children of grace, whose Mother she was, and she, too, was heard for her reverence.

Now then, O my soul, and as many as desire to be the children of grace, look up to Christ your Father in His bitter agony, and see how by His Death He has recalled you to life, and, like the faithful pelican, has quickened and nourished you, His little ones, with His own Blood. Look, too, on your sorrow-stricken Mother Mary, who suffered new pains of labor by reason of you, in order that you may be made the children of grace. Through your Father you have life, through your Mother, grace is given you. Have compassion, therefore, on your parents, whom you see laboring in such anxious pain for your salvation, if, indeed, you are the children of grace. Oh! how often did that most sad Mother lift up her eyes to gaze upon the disfigured Body of her Son, and yet was forced to cast them down, pouring forth bitter tears. She saw His wounded Body, and yet she could not anoint it; she saw the fearful Blood-shedding, yet it was not given to her to wipe it away; she saw His members cruelly extended, yet she could not loosen or relieve them. She beheld Him clad in His purple robe, with which she had not clothed Him; and the garment which He had received from her, all torn, and tattered, and worn. She saw Him bow down His Sacred Head to die, and all His members sighing for death, and this was the only relief and lightening of those her pains, whereby her tender heart was pressed out like a grape, so that she could truly say with her Son: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death."

Now when her sweet Son saw these things, Who so far had contained Himself, in order that her mighty faith, and her great faithfulness, and her unconquered patience, and her glorious passion, and, above all, her boundless love that could not be restrained, and lest the glory of her cross might be lessened, could now no longer contain Himself, but with tender and comforting voice addressed her, saying: “Woman, behold Your Son!” as if He would say: “Sweetest, dearest, most faithful Mother, I know your sorrow and woe; I know how much you suffered for the love of Me: I perceive the anguish of your devoted heart, when you behold Me, your beloved Son, in such exceeding pain, and when you are so pitiably deprived of your dear Child, in Whom is all your hope and consolation. But what comfort can I give you, sweetest and most faithful Mother? My Passion must be finished, and I must die; now has the hour come that I should go to Him Who sent Me. Therefore I leave to you My best loved disciple to be your son in the place of Me, to console you, and guard you, and to care for you, and that, as a dutiful son, he may be subject and obedient to you, his Mother.” But how, do you think, did these words of our Lord Jesus pierce His sad Mother’s tender heart, when she heard that she was left utterly destitute; that for the Son of God there was given her a child of man; for her Creator, a creature; for her Master, the disciple; for her Lord, a servant? How did her great love for our Lord then melt her utterly away, when she thought with herself of all His anxious care for her, and that He was more afflicted by compassion at His Mother’s sorrow than at His own Passion! For now death stood at His door, yet still He thought about His Mother. Devouring death had already nearly stiffened all His members, yet once more they grew warm again from love, and were moved to compassion. He put forth all the strength still left Him to console her, as if He had forgotten all His own woe, and was tormented by His Mother’s grief alone. Then, as well as He could, He turned all His members to comfort her. First, indeed, He bowed His Head, as if to bid the last farewell, and to ask her leave to depart from life. Then He lovingly turned to her, His eyes red with Blood, and still wet with warm tears. Lastly, He opened His lips, that were already growing pale with death, and said: “Woman, not My Mother only, but woman, in the widest sense, by reason of your great

fruitfulness”—even when in the past God had said to Abraham’s wife that she should be called no more Sarai, but Sara, “for I have made you the mother of many nations.” “Woman, behold your Son. Here is John, who will be your son, whose name, being interpreted, is grace. And I have granted you this privilege, that you may be the mother of grace for evermore, by reason of the exceeding great merits of your sorrow, nor shall your breasts be ever without the milk of grace, whereby you may foster and nourish all and each who presses them by devout prayer. Therefore, O most fruitful Woman, behold your Son, and weep no more, for you are no withered tree, no forsaken and barren mother without children. Rejoice, rather, for you are the most fruitful of all mothers that have ever been, and blessed above all women. By these pains of labor which now you suffer, You will bring forth children without number, and you shall be the mother of all, who by My grace shall believe in Me. All these, as your own children, shall you foster and guard in the bosom of your maternal grace, giving them to drink of the milk of your chaste breasts, because you yourself have found grace before God. All who thirst shall run to you, and say: ‘Show yourself to be our mother.’ Therefore, Woman, behold! not one Son alone, but many sons; and now forget your grief. Let this comfort you, and lighten and lessen your labor.”

O Mary, Mother of grace, Mother of mercy, strengthen us in all virtue, preserve us from all evil, and protect us from all the enemies of our souls.

Then our Lord said to His disciple: ‘Behold Your Mother!’ Now this was said not to John alone, but to all converted sinners, for whom grace is all necessary, and who, without grace, die like infants without milk. For no man can persevere or make progress without the nourishment of grace. O Mary! true mother of grace and of mercy, to whom have you ever closed the bosom of your grace? From whom have you ever withdrawn the breasts of your tenderness? Let him keep silent in your praise, who complained that he has suffered repulse from you, or has been defrauded of grace. We praise



virginity, we marvel at humility, we extol justice; but mercy is dearer to those who are in misery, and mercy we embrace with greater love, and remember more often, and more frequently invoke.

Therefore, as many of us as are in need of grace, let us stand by the Cross, and with Mary let us be crucified inwardly by compassion. Truly, our tender Lord, Who has spent His whole self and all that He has, will not allow us to go away from the Cross without comfort and reward. And although He is overwhelmed in pain, yet He will take care of us. Although He goes now to the Father, He will not leave us orphans; but He will commend us to His own Father, and will send us another Comforter, His own Holy Spirit. Moreover, He will give us His own spotless, Virgin Mother, saying: “Behold your Mother!” How sweet, how full of comfort is this word to all who are weak, that they should have so faithful, so kind, so merciful a mother, who learn compassion from what she herself suffered? Truly, she filled up in herself what was wanting, and belonging to Christ’s Passion, that by her merits she might bring help to all men. But oh! how small is our hope and trust in God! We have the Father of mercy for our Father, waiting for us with open bosom, that He may make us joint-heirs with His Son on high in the kingdom of heaven. The Son also is our Advocate, Who by His own labor and pain leads us back into the Father’s grace. We have the Holy Ghost for our Comforter in this valley of tears, that we may not be cast down in heart, or broken down from weariness. Moreover, we have received for our food Christ’s adorable Body and precious Blood, lest we faint by the way, and as a pledge of bliss to come, lest we should doubt or be overcome by despair. Lastly, Mary stands between us and God to reconcile us to Him, and to renew our peace. And what cannot such a Mother obtain from her Son? What more comforting word could Christ have spoken to us than this word: “Behold Your Mother!” Behold your Mother full of mercy, who will ever receive you as her children, full, also, of grace, who will feed and nourish you to the full.