

PRAYER 12.

A Prayer to the Father of Heaven.

LOOK now, I beseech You, O most merciful Father, on Your Only-begotten Son, and see how He has suffered for Your glory in the work of our redemption. See how the Only One of Your love, equal to You in glory, equal in power, has been disgraced between two thieves, and condemned to the shameful death of the Cross. Look upon His persevering obedience and patience, how with longing desire He has borne for Your honor all these pains, and all this bitterness, and contempt, and shame, and wrong, and all His horrible torments; and how He has exhausted and spent Himself beyond His human strength, with true resignation, and without any help from others, in order that He might accomplish Your gracious will. This is Your Beloved Son, in Whom You are well pleased. This is that true Jacob, Who, suffering persecution from Esau, the Jewish people, has walked humbly through the Jordan alone, with the weight of His Cross, that He might come back again to You with great riches, and an exceeding multitude of men. This is that true Joseph, Your dearest Son, sent by You in search of His brethren, whom He found in Dothaim, that is, in the midst of great sin and iniquity, but who was devoured by an evil beast, that is to say, by the pestilential poison of envy. This is Jesus, the good Shepherd, Who laid down His life for His sheep, and sought everywhere so earnestly for the one sheep that was lost, and Who, when He had found it, after exceeding labor, and drawn it out, and led it away from the filth of sin, laid it so lovingly on His shoulders, and brought it back to the sheepfold.

O Father of Mercies! see, I beseech You, how Your sweet Son has borne alone on His Cross the sins of the whole world; and how He Who never sinned, washed away all our filth and uncleanness in His own most pure Blood, and consumed them in the heat of His burning love. He Whom You have

appointed Judge, and to Whom You have given all power of judgment, out of His love has been sentenced to death, and has died, in order that He might redeem all who were guilty, and free them from their debts by paying the price of His own innocent Blood.

O Father of heaven, how brightly does Your divine image shine forth in Your most holy Son? How easy is it to know, through Your Divine Word, Your tender and Fatherly Heart? Now clearly do we acknowledge, that whoever sees Your Son, sees You also, and by the mercy of Your beloved Son, we do indeed understand how You are the Father of mercies, and the God of all consolation. See, most sweet Father, here is Your obedient Son, Who so thirsted after Your honor, that out of zeal and love for Your house, He wasted His Heart's blood, and the marrow of His bones, and was dried up like a broken earthenware, in order that He might lead all men along with Him to You, and that they might love, and thank, and praise You forever. Ah! What am I, a poor little worm of earth, that for my sake You spared not Your only-begotten Son? How have You loved me, whom You have redeemed at such a price! And, truly, if Your Fatherly Heart could have thought of anything better, this, too, would have been given as the price of my salvation, and for perfecting it. What shall I render You, O most holy Father, for all this Fatherly trust, and kindness, and love, which You have shown me through Your Only-begotten Son? In truth, if for Your love my heart could be divided, at every single moment of time, into as many little parts as there are little blades of grass on the earth, or drops of water in the sea, or particles of dust and sand on the mountains and in the valleys; and if each single part could ceaselessly praise You with an exceeding great gratitude, and serve and wait on You as diligently, and obey You as simply, and venerate and worship You as worthily, and love You with as great detachment, as even laid within the desire of all the blessed; and if, each part could suffer for Your honor as much as it should desire to suffer, until the last judgment day; yet not even then could I in any wise satisfy You, or worthily repay You for Your incomprehensible love, which You have poured upon me through Your Only One.

O most gracious Father! Your height of riches, depth of consolations, abyss of mercy, source and river of grace, origin of all good, abyss of holiness, paradise of delights, joy of heaven, full content of the blessed, on Whom I see the angels desire to look, behold! I praise, and laud, and thank and glorify, and extol, and magnify You, and all my inward parts confess, honor, and bless Your holy Name; for Your goodness, and loving-kindness, and grace and mercy towards me, are exceedingly great. And although I am a vessel of uncleanness, stained and spotted with many sins, and unworthy to praise You, yet am I bound and ought to praise You, by every right. Indeed, how can I ever cease from Your praise, when You cease not to show kindness unto me? Therefore, grant in Your mercy to be praised by me, a vile sinner; since You shrink not from bestowing daily on me, Your most neglectful servant, so many gifts and graces, and showing me so great and Fatherly faithfulness and love. Behold! again I offer You, most loving Father, this same only and beloved Son of Yours; in union with that love; whereby You gave Him then for me, when You did desire Him to take my nature, and afterwards to undergo the gibbet of the Cross. Nor in all my understanding can I think of nothing more noble, or more worthy, or more acceptable to Your Majesty. Moreover, I offer You also this sweet Son of Yours, in union with that love, whereby He offered himself as the highest sacrifice of praise, when on the altar of the Cross; with a loud cry and burning tears; He commended His soul into Your hands, and Himself, the great High Priest, entered the Holy of Holies, and uncovered the veil of the old tabernacle, and consecrated new Sacraments, not in the blood of sheep; and when anointed, not by the Jewish high-priest, with natural oil, but by You, His God and Father, with the oil of gladness, He washed away all the sins and trespasses of Your people in His own Blood. In addition to this I offer You His guiltless death, with all the merits of His bitter Passion, and of the blessed and spotless Virgin Mary, and of all the blessed, to Your eternal glory, for all my sins, iniquities, and negligences; also, for all the living and the dead, for whom You wish me to pray, O my God, and for whom I am bound to pray, that Your holy Name may be blessed, and praised, and honored by them for ever and ever. Amen.