

DAY 7.

Jesus is forsaken by His Disciples.

WHEN our Savior, as has been said, was so cruelly bound, and led away by those mad dogs in so miserable a plight, His disciples, terrified by exceeding great fear, fled away from their beloved Master, and left Him alone. But oh! what must have been their sorrow, when returning to themselves, and looking into the depths of their own hearts, they thought with themselves Whom they had forsaken, and from Whom they had separated themselves; and how faithlessly they had deserted their loving Master and most faithful Lord in the moment of His greatest need. Oh! how those fiery and piercing words, which Christ had spoken to them in warning, both at the supper and on the way, now glowed within them, and burnt into their hearts like live coals. For although they had torn themselves away from the fire, yet as men who had just come from the fire, they were still glowing with heat, and the sparks of fire were still bright within their breasts. And although Christ in His provident wisdom, had, for a little while, departed from them in the body, yet He had left behind Him in their hearts, His inward foot-prints, and the signs of His Visitation; that is to say, tears, and groans, and compunction of heart. He Who had once saved His people Israel in the wilderness, leading them by night by a pillar of fire, lest they should wander and fall into the hands of their enemies, He it is, the same Lord, Who now guarded and led His holy apostles by the support of His fiery love, lest in that dark night they should utterly lose their way, and fall under the power of Satan. For although He had been taken away from their bodily eyes, yet had He left His Spirit in their hearts, by which also they cried out: “Abide with us, Lord, for it is toward evening.” Oh! in what distress and anguish they went along, shedding many and bitter tears! Oh! how often with weeping eyes and many groans did they look up unto heaven! In what misery did they go along the way, weeping and crying aloud, complaining of their grief, and clasping their hands, as orphans without a father, desolate as sheep without a shepherd! How forcibly they struck their breasts, and said: “O gracious Master, O sweet

Father, O gentle Lord, Who has nourished us for so many days in delights, and has guarded us as Your own sons with loving care, and governed us with all zeal, and taught us with all wisdom, and loved us with all faithfulness, as if we had been Your own Heart! How is it that we have gone away from You so basely? Whither shall we now fly? Who henceforward will defend us? Ah! ravening wolves will now attack Thy sheep. Why have we forsaken You? Why did we not cling to You? Why did we not stand by You, as we promised, even unto death? Better far would it have been for us to die with You, than to live without You. Oh! how often meanwhile did they cast back their eyes on their Master, Whom they saw led away so cruelly to death! How often did they stop doubting in their minds, whether or not to go back to Him! How were love and fear fighting within them for the mastery! But all this was by God's permission, God so ordering, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

As for the rest, our sweet Jesus being now in the hands of His enemies, turned not His loving-kindness away even from these wicked ones, for He healed the ear of one of the Jewish servants, that had been cut off. Yet could not all this goodness and power, shown to these traitors, soften their hearts of stone.