

DAY 33.

Jesus complained of His thirst.

OUR most tender Lord was so exhausted and dried up by the exceeding great bitterness of His pain and anguish, and by His immoderate blood-shedding, that He cried out: “I thirst.” This is indeed a little word, but full of mysteries. First of all, it may be taken literally. For it is only natural, that all who are about to breathe their last should have thirst, and a desire to drink. But how great was the dryness felt by Him Who is the well-spring of living water, but Who was now exhausted and dried up by the heat of His burning love, when He could truly say: “Like water I am poured out;” and again, “My strength is dried up like an earthen vessel.” For not only did He shed all His own Blood, and pour forth whatever He had of moisture by His tears, but the very marrow of His bones, and all His Heart’s Blood, were consumed for our sakes by the heat and flame of His love. Rightly then, He said: “I thirst.”

Secondly, this word can be spiritually understood, as if Christ said to all in general: “I thirst for your salvation.” Hence St Bernard said: “‘I thirst,’ cried Christ, not ‘I grieve.’ O Lord, what do You thirst for? For your faith, your joy. I thirst because of the torments of your souls, far more than for those of My Body. Have pity, if not upon Me, at least upon yourselves.” And again: “good Jesus, You wore the crown of thorns: You were silent about Your Cross and Your Wounds, yet for thirst alone You cried out, ‘I thirst.’ What, then, do You thirst for? Truly for the redemption of man alone, and for the joy of the human race.” This thirst of Christ was a hundredfold more sharp and vehement than His natural thirst. He had, moreover, another kind of thirst, that is to say, of suffering more, and proving to us still more expressly and clearly His measureless love, as if He said to man: “See how I am exhausted and worn away for the sake of Your salvation. See how horrible are the pains and torments

that I suffer. The savage cruelty of men has brought Me down near to nothing—the sinners of earth have drunk out all My Blood, yet still I thirst. Not yet is My Heart satisfied, not yet is My desire fulfilled, not yet is the flame of My love quenched. For if it were possible for Me, and pleasing to My Father, that I should be crucified again even a thousand times for your salvation and conversion, or that I should hang here in all this misery and pain even until the last judgment day, most gladly would I do it, both to prove to you the measureless love of My Heart for you, and to soften your stony hearts, and to excite you to love Me in return. This is why I hang here so thirsty by the fountain of your hearts, so that I may observe the devout souls that come near to draw out of the bottomless well of My Passion. Therefore, the maiden to whom I shall say, “Give Me a little water to drink out of the pitcher of Your conscience”—the water, that is, of devotion, compassion, of tears and mutual love—and who shall let down her pitcher to Me, and shall answer: “Drink, my Lord; and for Your camels, that is, Your servants, who carry You about daily on their bodies, and who, both by night and day, are held fast bound in Your yoke, I will draw in like manner the water of brotherly love—that is, the maiden whom the Lord has prepared for the son of My Lord, even the bride of the Word of God, united to My Humanity. And she shall be worthy to enter, like a bride with her Bridegroom, into the bed-chamber of everlasting rest, at the invitation of the Bridegroom, Who said: “Come, My blessed bride, possess the kingdom of My Father. For I was thirsty, and You gave Me to drink.”

Thirdly, we may apply this word to the Father, as if Christ had said to His Father: “Father, I have made known Your Name unto men; I have finished the work You gave Me to do, and in Your work I have spent My whole Body as Your instrument. Behold! I am all exhausted and worn away; nevertheless, I still thirst to do and to suffer more for Your honor. This is why I hang here stretched out to the farthest breadth of love, for I desire to be an everlasting sacrifice, a sweet odor unto You, an eternal praise, and, at the same time, an everlasting atonement and salvation unto men.” Thus, too, might this strong Samson have said: “You, O Lord, have given into the hand of Your servant this exceeding great salvation and victory, and yet, behold! I die of thirst;” as if He would say: “My

Father, I have fulfilled Your gracious will; I have finished the work of man's salvation as You required it, yet still I thirst; for the sins whereby You are offended are infinite. Therefore I desire that the charity and merits of My Passion, whereby You are to be appeased, may be also infinite. And as I now offer Myself for the salvation of all men a peace-offering, and a living sacrifice, so through Me may all men appease You, by offering Me to You as a peace-offering to Your eternal glory, in memory of My Passion, and to supply for all their defects." How pleasing to the Father must have been this desire of love! For what else was this thirst, but a certain sweet and delightful refreshment to the Father, both warm and healing, and, at the same time, the blessed renewal of mankind! Or what other language does this burning throat speak to us, than that of Christ's burning love, out of which, indeed, measureless, and without bounds, He wrought all His works. In truth, this is the most noble sacrifice of our redemption, this is that peace-offering which will be offered even till the last day, by all the good, through the Holy Ghost, to the most high Father, in memory of the Son, to the everlasting glory of the Adorable Trinity, and the admirable profit and fruit of salvation for mankind. Here, clearly, is the measureless treasure of our reconciliation, which upon earth never fails, for it is greater than all the debts of the world. This is that measureless love, higher than the heavens, for it has restored again the ruin of the angels; deeper than hell, for it has freed souls from there; wider and broader than earth, for it is without end, and cannot be understood by any created understanding. Oh! how sharp and vehement was this thirst of our Lord! For not only did He then say once: "I thirst," but even still without ceasing He said within our hearts, "I thirst; woman, give Me to drink." So great, I say, and so mighty is that thirst, that He asked for drink, not only of the children of Israel, but even of the Samaritans. And to each one does He complain of His thirst.

But what do You thirst for, O good Jesus? "My drink and My food," He answered, "is that men should do My Father's will. Now this is the Father's will, even your sanctification and salvation, that you may sanctify your souls, by walking in My precepts, by performing true works of penance, by adorning yourselves with all virtues, that as a bride made ready and adorned, you may be worthy to

come to My supper in My Father's kingdom, and to sleep with Me as My elect bride, in the bed-chamber of My Father's Heart." Oh! with what longing does Christ desire to lead all men there. This is what He meant when He said: "Wherever I shall be, there also shall My servant be." And again: "Father, I will that even as We are one, they may be one." Oh! how beyond all understanding is this thirst of Christ! Oh! what sweat and labor He underwent three and thirty years for the sake of this! For this the marrow and blood of His very Heart were spent. See what our tender Lord said to His Father: "The zeal of Your house has eaten Me up." Truly, He would have allowed Himself to be crucified even a thousand times, rather than suffer one soul to perish for any fault of His. Oh! how did this inward thirst afflict Him, when He thought that He had both done all that He could, and even a hundredfold more than He needed to have done, and yet that so few had been turned to Him, and gained by Him. His whole Body was now worn away; all His Blood was shed; there was nothing left which He could do, and therefore He was forced to confess, and say: "It is finished;" yet, by all His labors, and sorrows, and pains, He had brought no greater fruit, no greater gain to His Father than this. Truly, it was the bitterest of all sorrows, that in so hard a fight His victory had not been more majestic, and that He returned victorious to His Father with so few spoils. Therefore, as many as refresh Him not by fulfilling His will, and earnestly performing whatever is pleasing and honorable to Him, and by manfully and bravely resisting all that reason tell them is displeasing to Him, all these will with the damned hear Him one day say: "I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink." Go, you cursed, into everlasting fire.

Fourthly, there is another inward meaning of this word; namely, that Christ uttered it out of the love which inwardly drew Him towards all men; thus declaring unto us His burning love, and opening His own Heart, as a delightful couch, where we may feed pleasantly on, and, at the same time, inviting us unto it, saying: "I thirst for you." For as the draught which we drink is sent down through the throat with sensible delight, and goes down pleasantly into our inward parts, and passes into the substance and nature of our body, even so Christ, out of the burning thirst of His love, takes spiritual delight in

drinking in all men into Himself, and thus receiving them, as it were, and sweetly swallowing them, and incorporating them into Himself, and bringing them into the secret chamber of His loving Heart. Therefore He said: “When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to Me;” that is, as many as allow themselves to be drawn by Me, and subject themselves unto Me as obedient instruments, allowing Me to do with them according to My gracious will. But they who resist Christ, who allow not themselves to be licked up by the flame and heat of Christ’s love, so that He may drink them in, and swallow them down into the depth of His being; these, indeed, quench not His thirst, but give Him a bitter draught instead, even the works of their own self-will. And these, as soon as our Lord tasted, He vomited out.

Fifthly, this word may be taken to express what our Lord said to His sorely afflicted Mother, as she stood by the Cross: “O My sweet Mother, see into what need the Son of God and Your Son has been brought down. I, indeed, created the seas, and the springs, and all moisture. I command the clouds, and they pour forth rain. To My angels I give to drink of the delights of heaven, and to My saints the cup of everlasting blessedness. To My friends still upon earth I give to drink of inward consolation, and to My disciples of Divine wisdom, and to all sinners I give the chalice of redemption. Yet there is not one, no, not one, who will refresh My tongue in this My bitter thirst.” Oh! how that word must have cut and pierced into the devout and heavy heart of the spotless Virgin, when she heard her only-begotten Son, Whom she had nursed on her virgin breast, complain of His thirst in His great need, and yet could not help Him. Perhaps, she answered Him this: “O my sweet Son, I am seized with such exceeding and intolerable anguish, that I cannot help You. I am so crucified with You by unutterable compassion, that I cannot move. I am now without any strength at all, because I see You, the only comfort of my heart, crucified so unjustly before my eyes, so shamefully despised, so cruelly slain: and yet I cannot die with You, nor bring You any help. I am wholly melted away—the marrow of my soul is melted. You see, O my loving Son, that I am all melted by the heat of Your love, and, like the grape, am pressed out by the grievous weight of Your Passion. Therefore, draw me

all into Yourself; drink me in, swallow me, change me into Your body, that I may be wholly Your refreshment and relief in Your grievous thirst.”

Sixthly and lastly, we may gather from this word that Christ obtained great consolation to His loving Mother and all the saints, and lightened the labor which they have borne for His sake, whether by action or by suffering. For even if their labor and affliction be small, yet is it altogether pleasing and delicious, like Christ, to take some sweet drink. For, on the Cross itself, He drank in with great delight all the compassion, sorrow, devotion, sighs and tears, which were the fruit of meditation upon the Passion. And all the persecutions, distresses, afflictions borne for His honor, all the rigorous penances, fasts, prayers, watchings; all the mortifications of nature; all the works of obedience and charity, and all the deeds to be performed in His honor even to the last judgment day; all these our Lord Jesus drank in, in a certain marvelous way, and swallowed them in His great thirst, and joined to His own Body, and united with His own works, and cleansed in His warm Blood, and heated in the fire of His divine love, and perfected and finished, by His own merits and actions, whatever was imperfect and defective, and so at last offered them in the sight of His Eternal Father, and made them pleasing and acceptable unto Him.