

Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst" (In. 19:28). Thirst is perhaps one of the most agonizing torments of death by crucifixion. A raging fever is produced by the inflammation of

## The Thirst of Jesus Crucified

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And then, one would say, the light entered his soul and he acknowledged the divinity of Christ in asking for a remembrance in His kingdom. "O wondrous conversion!" exclaims St. John Chrysostom, "He sees one crucified and proclaims him the King of glory!" "He sees the gaping wounds and the flowing blood," says St. Ambrose, "and far from believing Him a criminal, he recognizes Him as God." After his prayer the thief was silent and Jesus said nothing more, but their eyes regarded each other and their two hearts spoke. "In hoc enim totius forma salutis," says St. Ambrose of the good thief's conversion: "Here is the pattern of all salvation." O Jesus, You show me in this incident the frightening power that You have given to men of either accepting or refusing Your favors. Your graces of repentance solicited the hearts of both thieves. One accepted them and passed from the cross to eternal happiness; the other resisted You. To think of yielding to despair in the very presence of the Mother of Sorrows, by whose intercession, surely, the good thief was saved! Divine Savior, grant me to remember in all temptations against the virtue of hope and to help others to remember the power of Your cross and Your infinite compassion.

the open wounds and the prolonged tension of nerves and muscles.

O Jesus, fill me with the desire of winning souls for You.

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The intensity of the agony of thirst suffered by Jesus on the cross can be judged from the fact that He spoke of it. As cruel as His other sufferings were, He did not complain. He did not speak of the thorns, nor of the scourging, nor of the nails that pierced His hands and feet. But His thirst drew from our Savior a request for its relief. During the sufferings of the passion no cooling drink had moistened His lips. His blood had flowed in streams during the scourging, the crowning with thorns, and the crucifixion; His whole body burned with fever. Yet even now He uttered His complaint with great reserve. He did not make a direct request and it was late, very late, when He revealed His suffering. Moreover, His chief purpose in making it known was to show that He willed to experience this torment also, and that not a drop in the bitter chalice of the crucifixion had been refused by Him.

Jesus also intended to proclaim the literal fulfillment of David's prophecy: *My throat is dried up like baked clay, my tongue cleaves to my jaws; to the dust of death you have brought me down.* He wished to remind us, too, of another thirst that tormented Him, of which His physical thirst was only a faint image. He thirsted for the salvation and redemption of all men, all without exception. He saw before Him in spirit all the members of the human race and He burned with desire for their salvation. For, besides the glory of the Father, what other purpose had His suffering and His death except the redemption of men whom He loves so much?

Hearing our Savior's cry, one of the soldiers compassionately

"But one of the soldiers opened his side with a lance, and immediately there came out blood and water" (Jn. 19:34). According to Jewish law, the condemned had to be taken down from the cross and buried before evening. At the Jews' request, therefore, Pilate sent soldiers to break the legs of the crucified in order to hasten their death. Jesus was already dead. Yet, probably to obey orders and make sure of His death, one of the soldiers plunged his lance into our Savior's side. Immediately, blood and water flowed out of the wound.

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## The Piercing of Our Savior's Side

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APRIL 2

dipped a stalk of hyssop into a vessel full of "vinegar," that is, "common wine," and raised it to His lips. This was the relief that men offered to Him who gives all things to them in abundance, who opens to them fountains of living water and who lavishes upon them the *good wine*. Nor does the deeper thirst of our Savior receive a more comforting relief, for only one of the thieves offered Him his soul. How many who pass before the cross of Jesus refuse to give Him their souls! O Mary, Mother of Sorrows, I grieve with you in the added suffering which this cry of Jesus brought to your heart. You would have given your life gladly to offer to Jesus a little water, but you were unable to give Him even this small relief. Help me, my good Mother, to offer to Jesus in union with You, for the consolation of His deeper thirst, my good will, my reparation, my heart and soul; and enable me to work with zeal and success for the salvation of others.

Divine Redeemer, increase my devotion to Your Sacred Heart and most Precious Blood.

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In permitting His side to be pierced, Jesus wished to give us another and undeniable proof of the reality of His death. At the very least the wound made by the lance would have caused His death; and it is this fact, above all, that St. John wishes to attest. Our Savior was really dead, and His sacrifice was one in which the victim gives the last drop of his blood. The side of Jesus opened by the lance is the last of the sorrowful mysteries. This wound exposed to view, as it were, the Heart of Jesus, revealing it as the Seat of love, the Center and Source of the life, virtues, merits, and all the mysteries of the God-Man. The devotion to the Precious Blood and the devotion to the Sacred Heart have their origin in the mystery of the piercing of Jesus' side with the lance. All this is the luminous side of the mystery; but with what shadow and sadness the soldier's action must have enveloped the sorrowful Mother of our Savior and His little group of faithful friends who remained at the foot of the cross!

What shall we say of our Lady's alarm and grief when she saw the soldier approaching her Son? To her faith and love there was nothing on earth holier than the lifeless body of the Savior. The lance did not pierce the body of Jesus more deeply than it pierced the heart of Mary. With what reverence and bitter tears she must have received the blood and water that flowed down upon the rock of Calvary! We may imagine her contemplating the cruel wound and offering to the Sacred Heart Its first homage of love and reparation.

Jesus annulled with His precious blood the sentence which had condemned us as sinners. Our sins made Him die and

Contemplate the Mother of Sorrows on Calvary; and his mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene" (Jn. 19:25).

The Compassion of Our Lady

APRIL 3

His death restored us to life. And the nearer His death approached the more tender His love for us became. He seems then truly to have breathed only love. He prayed, and it was a prayer of compassion, "Father, forgive them." He promised, and it was a promise of pity, "Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise." He gave His final gift on earth, and it was a pledge of mercy, "Behold thy mother." Let us go to Jesus on the cross with confidence, for we shall find there the way to His heart. The passage into this heart, on fire with the most ardent love, was opened by the lance, which He permitted to pierce His side. "O blessed lance, which has been the source of such great good for us," exclaims Pope St. Innocent IV, "O sacred nails, which deserved to bear so venerable a weight, and to be drenched with the blood that has cleansed us from our sins." O Jesus, love opened Your heart to me, love leads me to its love. I will receive me there. You will not reject me, Lord, although I am all unworthy of Your mercy. It is with the liveliest confidence that I come to hide myself in Your open side. There I wish to live and die—that good and blessed death of those who die in the Lord.

O Mary, Mother of Sorrows, grant me some share in the feelings you experienced during the passion of your Son.

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With unutterable sorrow, Mary followed Jesus, at least in spirit through every step of His bitter passion. It is probable that she was in the Cenacle during the agony in the garden; but she undoubtedly witnessed in spirit all that took place in the Grotto of the Agony, and obtained from the Eternal Father the privilege of sharing in some degree the sufferings of her Son. Through Peter and, especially, through John, Mary was probably kept fully informed of events: the arrest of Jesus toward midnight, the flight of the disciples, the trial before Annas and Caiphas, the mockery and the scourging. This last suffering she may even have witnessed. At all events, we are certain that the whole frightful spectacle of Calvary was unfolded before Mary's eyes. She saw the nails and the wounds, she heard the blasphemies and cruel jests, and the words and groans of her Son.

After the cross was raised Mary stood beside it, her eyes fixed upon her dying Son. With what deep sorrow she must have gazed upon the thorns crowning His head and the nails piercing the sacred hands and feet! Mary witnessed also the casting of lots for His garments. They were now most holy relics, sanctified by their contact with the sacred humanity of Jesus and with His precious blood. How Mary must have burned with the desire of acquiring this treasure and preserving it for the Church! Then, after the death of Jesus, she beheld the Sacred Heart pierced with a lance and the blood and water flowing out. Her arms received the sacred body when it had been taken down from the cross and she assisted at the burial.

It is impossible even to imagine the greatness and depth

of Mary's sorrow during these hours; yet she bore all her suffering freely and voluntarily. That which brought our Lady to the foot of the cross and kept her there was, first of all, her faith, which revealed to her the full meaning of the death of Jesus. She knew that it was the sacrifice offered for our redemption. And as Eve had co-operated in the fall, it was right that the new Eve should take an effective part in the restoration of mankind. But it was Mary's love also which exacted from her the cruel sacrifice of being present at the death of Jesus. How could the Mother of Jesus endure suffering as great as this? Because her love was stronger than death and because, as His Mother, she desired to share the pain and ignominy of her Son. It is not in vain that you have been given the name of "Children of Our Lady of Sorrows." Consider this day the sufferings of Mary during the passion of her divine Son. Gather with her the fruits of the Cross that you may enjoy in eternity the fruits of the Tree of life.

O thou Mother, fount of love!  
Touch my spirit from above  
Make my heart with thine accord.

Make me feel as thou hast felt;  
Make my soul to glow and melt  
With the love of Christ our Lord.

Let me share with thee His pain,  
Who for all my sins was slain,  
Who for me in torments died.

Let me mingle tears with thee,  
Mourning Him who mourned for me,  
All the days that I may live.

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took the body of Jesus from Mary's arms and prepared it for burial, wrapping it in strips of cloth sprinkled with the spices Nicodemus had brought and then enveloping it in a shroud of fine linen. A napkin was laid over the sacred head and face. Perhaps the placing of this last was reserved for Mary herself. With what deep sorrow she must have gazed for the last time on the features of her Son! And when His face was hidden under the veil, it must have seemed to her as if the light of her own life had been extinguished, that henceforth there would be only shadows around her. Then Jesus was laid in the tomb that had been furnished by Joseph of Arimathea, his own sepulcher which he gave to his Lord and Master. As the newborn Jesus was laid in a cradle that did not belong to Him, so now He rested in another's sepulcher. And again,

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“To what shall I compare thee? Or to what shall I liken thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? To what shall I equal thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Sion? For great as the sea is thy destruction” (Lam. 2:13).

After the burial of Jesus, Mary, more desolate even than the Jerusalem of the prophet's lamentation, felt in all its weight the suffering Jesus had laid upon her in making her our Mother. O compassionate Virgin Mother, reveal to me the depths of the mystery of your Son's bitter passion and your own overwhelming grief.

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*The Seventh Dolor of Our Lady*

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as in Bethlehem where Joseph helped Mary place Jesus in His crib, she is today assisted by another Joseph in laying Him in His tomb.

It was a new sorrow for our Lady to have to leave Jesus, and yet, even now, after her long agony there was no weakening in her. Neither in soul nor body did Mary know an instant's wavering. Her love and fortitude surpassed incomparably the love and fortitude of the martyrs, as her sufferings immeasurably surpassed theirs. Thus the liturgy hails Mary as the "First Rose of the martyrs" as well as "Lily among virgins." At the Communion of the Mass for the feast of the Seven Dolors, the Church exclaims, "Happy the senses of the Blessed Virgin, which without dying earned the palm of martyrdom beneath the cross of our Lord." The Gospel which so unobtrusively mentions the presence of Mary on Calvary will speak of her no more. It will mention the Galilean women who came to the holy sepulcher to complete the embalming on the morrow of the Sabbath, but Mary disappears. Yet it was she who felt during a night, a day, and still another night, with deeper grief than anyone, the frightful void caused by the departure of Jesus. Truly Mary has kept well the secret of her dolors. The scattered hints contained in Scripture have been lovingly preserved by the Church, and her sacred liturgy adds its compassionate and reverent comments; but the heart of the mystery is only to be penetrated by the light of living faith shed upon the inspired words. It is only to be reached by the soul who contemplates these words with the understanding and wisdom that are the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Let us ask our Lady, the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, to lead us herself to that insight into her sorrows which is beyond the reach of human words.

Holy Mother! pierce me through;  
In my heart each wound renew  
Of my Savior crucified.

Let me share with thee His pain,  
Who for all my sins was slain,  
Who for me in torments died.

Let me mingle tears with thee,  
Mourning Him who mourned for me  
All the days that I may live.

By the cross with thee to stay,  
There with thee to weep and pray,  
Is all I ask of thee to give.

APRIL 5

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### *The Triumphal Entry Into Jerusalem*



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“And most of the crowd spread their cloaks upon the road, while others were cutting branches from the trees, and strewing them on the road. And the crowds that went before him, and those that followed, kept crying out, saying, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’” (Mt. 21:8, 9.)

The day of our Savior’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem was the most glorious of His mortal life. It was the divine will that the Jews also should give external acknowledgment of the Kingship of Jesus, as the Gentiles had done in the homage of the Magi shortly after His birth.

O Jesus, grant that like the crowd which surrounded You on the day of Your triumph, I may glorify You in thought, word, and action.

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As, with Bethany behind them, our Savior and the disciples were ascending the eastern slope of Mount Olivet, Jesus directed two of His followers to go to a village called Bethphage, which lay before them, and bring to Him an ass which they would find tied with her foal. If the owner of the ass offered objection, they were to answer that the Lord had need of them. All happened as Jesus had described, and when the disciples returned with the animals, they spread their cloaks on them in place of a saddle and the usual coverings. Jesus mounted the foal, leaving the ass to follow behind. Then, probably, the disciples formed an escort about the Savior, and the people of the neighborhood, observing the festive procession, doubtless joined it. In their enthusiasm they spread their garments on the road to serve as rugs — a gesture which has always been regarded as a mark of great respect. They cut branches from the trees and strewed them, also, in our Savior's path.

The disciples and the crowd together cried out as they descended Mount Olivet, *"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes! Hosanna in the highest! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"* The pilgrims who had come for the Pasch and were encamped about the Holy City also joined the procession and, infected by the general enthusiasm, added their cries of praise. As the shouting throng entered Jerusalem, the whole city was aroused and all asked, *"Who is this?"* But the crowds kept on saying, *"This is Jesus the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee."*

This triumphal procession in honor of our Savior was a solemn testimony of gratitude to Him for His miracles, and it was also a proclamation of Him as King and Messiah; for the cries, the palms, the olive and myrtle branches formed

part of the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles, a Messianic feast. Moreover it was the fulfillment of Zacharias' prophecy that the Messiah would come to Sion *riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass*. And there is still another striking circumstance which added to our Savior's glory in His triumph. Although He came so modestly and humbly, for the external trappings of His triumph did not even belong to Him, He instantly evoked the homage of the crowd. The enthusiasm of the disciples, which was the work of the Holy Spirit, communicated itself to all hearts. There were no obstacles. The Pharisees tried in vain to quell the general rejoicing and Pilate himself, so opposed ordinarily to all public demonstrations, especially near the feast of the Passover, seems not to have disturbed himself over this triumph. It was our Savior's will to prepare for the ignominy of His passion by this day of glory, just as He would prepare for His eternal glory by the ignominy of the passion.

"O God, whom to love above all is righteousness, multiply in us the gifts of Thine ineffable grace; and since in the death of Thy Son Thou hast given us the hope for those things which we believe, grant us through His resurrection to attain the end for which we long" (Collect for the Blessing of the Palms).

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### *The Second Cleansing of the Temple*



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"And he entered the temple, and began to cast out those who were selling and buying in it" (Lk. 19:45).

Despite their enthusiastic reception of Him, no one in Jerusalem

appears to have offered Jesus hospitality, for on the evening of Palm Sunday He and the Apostles returned to Bethany. Perhaps He spent the night in prayer, but early in the morning He came to the Temple.

O Jesus, grant me a vivid realization of Your Eucharistic presence.

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When our Savior entered the Temple on the morning after His triumph, He found its outer approaches invaded by a noisy crowd of merchants and money-changers. A kind of market had been set up in the Court of the Gentiles where worshipers, especially those from a distance, might purchase sacrificial victims. Although this was the second time that He drove the buyers and sellers from the Temple, Jesus proceeded with moderation and prudence. On the previous day, after His triumphal entry into the Holy City, He had merely *looked around upon all things* in the Temple. To His sorrow He found the disorder and abuse which He had banished three years before again defiling His Father's House, owing, no doubt, to the weakness or indifference or cupidity of the chief priests and the Temple authorities. Probably He showed His disapproval at His first visit on the day of His triumph, but He saw that more decisive action was needed; and so, on the following morning, He undertook the second cleansing of the Temple. And now He acted with greater severity than the first time, for on this occasion He overturned the seats of those who sold doves, instead of merely admonishing them to remove their wares. He also denounced the carrying of vessels through the Temple, which was apparently being used as an ordinary thoroughfare.

Then He began to teach saying, "*Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of thieves.*" The second cleansing

of the Temple, like the first, was a symbol of our Savior's mission. He had come to restore to the ancient religion its purity, to fulfill its prophecies, and to bring it to perfection. St. Matthew alone relates that, after Jesus had driven the vendors from the Temple, *the blind and the lame came to him in the temple and he healed them*, and that the children cried out in the Temple, saying, "*Hosanna to the Son of David.*" All this, but especially the Messianic cry within the very Temple walls, only added to the indignation of our Savior's enemies. The chief priests and the Scribes said to Him, "*Dost thou hear what these are saying?*" Jesus answered, "*Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of infants and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?'*" Thus Jesus tried to bring home to these students of the Law how little they understood its true meaning. In quoting from the eighth psalm He intended to show that the homage of the humble and the lowly is agreeable to God.

O Jesus, urgently and repeatedly You teach us the lesson of reverence for the house of God. And the church wherein You dwell with us in the Holy Eucharist is far holier than the Temple. You are also in my soul by Your grace and daily You honor it with Your Eucharistic presence. Grant me the grace of conducting myself always with reverential fear before You in the Blessed Sacrament, and let a continual remembrance of Your indwelling in my soul maintain in me the reserve and dignity befitting Your holy presence.

*Jesus Challenged by the Rulers*



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“By what authority dost thou do these things? And who gave thee this authority?” (Mt. 21:23.)

The chief priests and authorities of the Temple considered the act of Jesus in driving the vendors out of the temple an encroachment upon their rights. Moreover, they could not tolerate this exposition of their greed and lack of faith before the great gathering of pilgrims who had come for the feast of the Pasch.

O Jesus, increase in me the spirit of devotedness.

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Shocked by our Savior's bold stroke in cleansing the Temple, the chief priests said nothing at the time, but on Tuesday when He appeared, they demanded the reason for His conduct the day before. Their intention in this was, clearly, to execute a major step in their plot against Jesus. They made their demand publicly, in the Temple, and in the presence of the people. Besides, they proceeded in an official manner. The deputation consisted of Scribes and other notables in addition to the priests. They presented themselves in the name of the Sanhedrin and probably with a great external display of their authority and prestige. Furthermore, their conduct was all arrogance and artifice. When Jesus had cleansed the Temple at the beginning of His public life, they had asked for a miracle which would prove His right to act thus. Now they challenged Him to tell them by what authority He acted and from whom He had received it. Whatever His answer, whether that the power was His own or that it came from God, they hoped to trap Him.

After the manner of rabbinic discussion our Savior answered question with question: "*Was the baptism of John from heaven, or from men?*" This rejoinder was evasive and rightly so, because the question which evoked it had been prompted by insincerity. Besides, the priests themselves had once asked this same question of John and between that day and the time of John's martyrdom it had become increasingly evident to men of good will that John was a man of God and his work of heavenly origin. Moreover, St. John the Baptist had expressed himself formally on the subject of the Person of Jesus and His right to exercise power. His baptism here stands for his mission as Precursor. If, then, the priests were to say that the baptism of John was from God, they themselves would answer the question they had put to Jesus. This answer they could not give, for it would destroy their case. But with the people present and listening to this interview, they dared not openly say otherwise. In an awkward attempt to escape the embarrassing dilemma, therefore, they answered that they did not know the source of John's authority to baptize.

This reply was an act of cowardice and an infamous falsehood; it represented a formal rupture with the past and with the prophets, of whom St. John the Baptist was the last. In the face of such malice and hypocrisy, our Savior was perfectly justified in refusing to declare by what authority He had driven the buyers and sellers from the Temple.

Divine Savior, Your intrepid courage is once more revealed in this mystery. To act as You did in driving the vendors from the Temple was, under the circumstances, a truly dangerous act, for it unleashed against You all the more the hatred of the Jewish priesthood. But when there was question of zeal for the glory of God and the honor of His house, You seem always to have resorted to the more terrifying external acts of Your

authority and power. You also reveal here again Your wisdom and prudence. In spite of their cleverness Your enemies were forced to recognize their defeat and to yield in confusion. How instructive it is, also, O Jesus, to see You employing the last days of Your life in teaching and in works of zeal, and how moving to hear You giving testimony at this time to Your Precursor! You began Your public mission with St. John the Baptist and it is with him that You close it. O my Savior, help me to learn from You how to be both fearless and prudent, how to be wise as the serpent and simple as the dove.

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### *The Betrayal by Judas*



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“What are you willing to give me, and I will deliver him to you?” (Mt. 26:15.)

It was probably on the Wednesday following our Savior's triumph that Judas made his offer to the chief priests and elders of the people as they were assembled in council. The immediate cause of Judas' treacherous act seems to have been his resentment of his Master's reprimand at the supper in Bethany and also the loss of the price of the ointment with which Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, had anointed Jesus.

Divine Savior, grant me a salutary fear of all willful sin and an instant awareness of the occasions of mortal sin.

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The obduracy and ingratitude of the hardened sinner is always a mystery, but a remote cause of Judas' crime is to be found in the baseness of his character, marks of which were inconstancy and want of firmness. He was also given

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to worldly thoughts and views and to ambition and cupidity. With these bad dispositions of soul he lost faith little by little. Perhaps in the beginning he believed in Jesus sincerely, but at the time of our Savior's discourse on the mystery of the Eucharist at Capharnaum, Judas no longer had faith. Jesus Himself revealed this when He said, "*Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil.*" There may have been also a certain restlessness and discontent with the circumstances of his life. Judas was weary, perhaps, of the wandering existence led by his Master and of His perpetual renunciation; for this reason, it may be, he sought to draw some temporal advantage from his lot and, as St. John tells us, formed the habit of taking what was put into the common purse, which was in his care.

Then, too, the private admonitions that the Master had doubtless given him irritated and weighed upon Judas. We may also infer that, because the traitor had lost personal devotion to our Savior through disillusionment in his false Messianic hopes, the enthusiastic love of the other Apostles and friends of the Savior only annoyed him. Perhaps their generous devotion seemed to him excessive and aroused in him an actual aversion to his Master. These last-mentioned dispositions appear to have manifested themselves at Bethany when Mary poured the ointment upon the head and feet of Jesus. The remonstrance of Judas on this occasion showed a want of respect for our Savior and an insensibility which already makes us fear for him. Still another cause of his fall, the influence of which extended to all the other factors that have been mentioned, was the action of the devil. His power over Judas became stronger as Judas yielded more and more to his passions and to temptations against faith.

A particular outrage which must have been especially pain-

“And having taken bread, he gave thanks and broke, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is being given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In like manner he took



### *The Institution of the Eucharist*

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ful to our Savior was that Judas consummated his crime on his own initiative. He himself went to the chief priests and shamelessly inquired what they would give him as the price for the betrayal. Judas knew well with whom he was dealing, yet he agreed to deliver Jesus into their hands, and for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave among the Jews. Even worse, it would seem that Judas would have been willing to close the transaction at a still lower price.

○ Jesus, what humiliation and sorrow Judas caused You by his betrayal! It is impossible to understand how he, an Apostle, could have descended to this most odious of crimes. But let my reflection upon the fall of Judas inspire me with salutary fear and lead me to resolve to avoid the occasions of sin and to permit myself no compromise with my passions. And how sad it is to think, my Jesus, that Judas' abominable crime is repeated in every mortal sin; every time grace, the truths of faith, the interests of souls and the Church are sacrificed for a temporal good! Unhappily, such sacrifices are not rare in the world. As for myself, O merciful Savior, if Your grace keeps me from committing great sins, must I not humble myself for the many times that I have at least bargained with Your enemy, that self-love might be gratified and pride indulged? Forgive me, once again and keep me safe under the shadow of your wings.

After the eating of the paschal lamb, when the moment had come for the blessing of the unleavened bread, Jesus took into His hands one of the three loaves that were placed on the Paschal table, consecrated it, broke it into as many portions as there were guests present, and distributed them, saying, "This is my body." Then, before passing the ritual "cup of blessing," He gave thanks and said, "All of you drink of this; for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is being shed for many unto the forgiveness of sins." The Paschal bread and wine were no longer bread and wine; they had become the Body and Blood of the Savior; and not a lifeless Body or isolated Blood, but the Body and Blood such as they were when Jesus spoke the words of consecration. Thus were celebrated the first Holy Mass and the first Communion. This was a moment of vital importance for the Church, since in instituting the Holy Eucharist, Jesus took up His life in this world under a new form, inaugurated the Holy Sacrifice of the New Law, and founded the Catholic priesthood. Now death could come and deprive us of the visible presence of our Savior, since He would be no less really and substantially present among us and in His Church.

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also the cup after the supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which shall be shed for you" (Lk. 22:19, 20).

After washing the feet of His Apostles, our Savior instituted the Holy Eucharist. It was the climax of the Last Supper, the realization of the great promise He had made the year before in the synagogue at Capharnaum, and the fulfillment of the mystery foreshadowed in the two multiplications of the loaves. O Jesus in the Eucharist, grant me the grace of offering You a pleasing homage of gratitude and reparation.

The Church is literally the Church of Jesus Christ, for He is present in her and she is His Spouse and His Mystical Body. Without the Eucharist, our Savior would be twenty centuries away from us.

Moreover, we now possessed a new sacrifice, whereby earth became precious even in the eyes of heaven, in that it was now able to offer to heaven an inexhaustible treasure, an ever pleasing fragrance. Equally splendid are the blessings of Holy Communion. Without the Eucharist, what would this earth be for our souls? Even in the fullness of earthly happiness and in the abundance of all good material things, our souls would languish and pine away; for besides this Bread of Life we have only perishable nourishment. What happiness and honor for us, also, that so large a number of the children of men are called to participate in the glorious Priesthood of Jesus Christ! The Holy Eucharist, the Holy Mass, should, rightly, be the center, the axis, so to speak, of our thoughts and our love; rather, they should be our life.

On the night of that last supper,  
Seated with His chosen band,  
He, the Paschal Victim eating,  
First fulfills the Law's command;  
Then as food to all His brethren  
Gives Himself with His own hand.

Word made flesh, the bread of nature,  
By His word to flesh He turns;  
Wine into His blood He changes;  
What though sense no change discerns?  
Only be the heart in earnest,  
Faith her lesson quickly learns.

Down in adoration falling,  
Lo, the sacred Host we hail,

No moment in the history of the world is so memorable, so awesome and moving, as the moment when the cross of Jesus Christ was raised on Calvary. And when the cross with its precious Burden was finally in its place, dominating the horizon as the mysterious Sign of divine justice and mercy, the crowd surged toward it. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself," Jesus had said. For the moment, this movement was one of hatred, but it

"And when they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there" (Lk. 23:33).  
 Jesus, having arrived at Mount Calvary, the place of execution, was stripped of His garments and nailed to the cross.  
 O Jesus crucified, grant that I may enter more deeply into the mystery of Your passion and death.



### *The Crucifixion of Jesus*

APRIL 10

Lo, o'er ancient forms departing  
 Newer rites of grace prevail;  
 Faith for all defects supplying,  
 Where the feeble senses fail.  
 To the everlasting Father  
 And the Son who reigns on high,  
 With the Holy Ghost proceeding  
 Forth from each eternally,  
 Be salvation, honor, blessing,  
 Might and endless majesty.

was presently to be a surge of love whose great waves were to beat against this rock and the holy Cross until the end of time.

The Evangelists draw a discreet veil over the slow agony of Jesus on the cross; but having hung there for about three hours and having suffered the loss of blood which follows upon crucifixion, Jesus died really and truly the death of the cross. But He died freely and because He willed it. The sufferings He had endured since His agony in the Garden of Gethsemani were in themselves, naturally speaking, capable of causing His death; but He could be deprived of life only with His consent. This consent Jesus gave at about the ninth hour, when, having uttered a loud cry, He bowed His head and *gave up his spirit*. Our Savior bowed His head before dying and not afterward as other men do, in order to indicate His voluntary consent to His death.

Then, His lifeless body hung upon the cross, the worthy and holy Victim of the infinite love of His heart for God and for men. The sacrifice was consummated. It was at about the time of the evening sacrifice in the Temple, and perhaps at that very moment they were beginning the immolation of the Paschal Lamb. But the long wail of the trumpets in the Temple courts was, in reality, an announcement to heaven and earth and to the souls in Limbo that the great Sacrifice of the true Paschal Lamb had just been offered. The death of Jesus is the model, the crown, the consummation and source of all sanctity in death and also in life; for if we live, we draw our life from His life-giving death. He merited all for us by His sacrifice.

O Sacred Head, bowed in death, I adore You. Sacred Hands, that wrought so many cures and bestowed so many blessings, heal my soul and bless me. Divine Feet, weary with seeking the

lost sheep of Israel, lead all men into the true fold. May Your precious blood, O Jesus, cleanse me of my sins and set my heart aflame with Your love. Attach me to Your cross by the nails of obedience, poverty, and mortification. O Good Shepherd, You have laid down Your life for Your sheep, and with what patience and love! Even more, You have given us Your body and blood to be our food, Mary as our Mother, the Church as our home here below, and heaven as our eternal dwelling.

What more could I ask of You than the pardon that You sought for Your executioners; since by my sins I also have contributed to Your death? Grant in addition to the excess of Your love for me the grace of living and the happiness of dying for You. Let the sight of Your cross give me courage. Permit that my eyes may remain fixed upon this symbol of mercy and forgiveness; when they are closed to the light of this world. Accept, merciful Jesus, my loving gratitude for this final proof of Your love for me. O Incarnate Son of the Eternal Father, I adore Your sacred body, Your precious blood, and the holy cross that have brought us our salvation!

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APRIL 11

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### *The Burial of Jesus*



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“Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. There, accordingly, because of the Preparation Day of the Jews, for the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus” (Jn. 19:41, 42).

The necessity of haste appears to have allowed time only for the

wrapping of the body of Jesus in the shroud, previously sprinkled with preservative spices. Then it was laid in the new tomb that belonged to Joseph of Arimathea. An enormous stone, shaped like a millstone, was rolled in front of the opening; then all withdrew to observe the Sabbath rest.

O Mary, help me to imitate your spirit of faith.

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The body of Jesus, although separated for a brief interval from His soul, was still united to the Person of the Son of God. Divine too was the blood that drenched the rock and soil of Calvary. Nor did the soul of Jesus, during its separation from His body, lose for an instant its union with the Word. At the moment of its separation from His body, His soul descended into limbo. *Put to death indeed in the flesh*, writes St. Peter, *he was brought to life in the spirit in which also he went and preached to those spirits that were in prison*. How majestic must have been the entrance of Jesus into this abode of the just, and what joy He must have brought to the holy exiles there! We may imagine them offering Him their adoration with transports of joy — all the just of the Old Testament, from our first parents to St. John the Baptist, St. Elizabeth, and St. Joseph, all the prophets, patriarchs, kings, priests, all the ancestors of our Savior.

With what divine complacency Jesus must have looked upon this portion of the Church purchased by His blood, for its merits were applied to the souls of the just, by the mercy of the Eternal Father, long before it was shed on Calvary. The power of Jesus, although not His presence, was felt also in hell where now and forever at the name of Jesus, every knee must bend. The demons had instigated the Jews to crucify the Incarnate Son of God, but by this same act they had worked for the salvation of the world. The weapons

which they thought to use against Him were now turned against themselves.

The Mother of Jesus passed the night of the crucifixion in Jerusalem, doubtless going over in her memory the sorrowful events she had witnessed. With her were the heart-broken Magdalene and the other holy women. John, Peter, and the other Apostles and disciples were overwhelmed with grief. All except Mary seemed to have forgotten the promise of the Resurrection. The Church in today's *Tenebrae* service represents the men as saying, "Behold how the just man dies, and no one takes it to heart; and just men are taken away and no one considers it; the just man has been taken away from the face of iniquity; and his memory shall be in peace." The holy women, for their part, were preparing for the morrow's visit to the sepulcher, when they expected to complete the anointing of our Savior's body. Mary alone lived in the expectation of His triumph. As her chaste womb had encompassed Him whom heaven and earth cannot contain, so on this first Easter eve, by her unwavering faith, Mary comprised in her single self the whole Church.

*Sing praise to the Lord, you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name. For his anger lasts but a moment; a lifetime, his good will. At nightfall, weeping enters in, but with the dawn, rejoicing. O my Jesus, You became the captive of death to deliver me from eternal death. I hail Your tomb and venerate Your thorn-marked head, Your open side, and Your transpierced hands and feet. I offer You the sentiments of Your desolate Mother and Your beloved disciple. I beg You to bury me with You that I may rise again with You.*

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*The Resurrection of Our Savior*

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"The Lord has risen indeed, Alleluia" (Invitatory of Matins for Easter Sunday).  
 Easter is the most glorious feast of the God-Man. It is, as the martyrology terms it, the "Solemnity of solemnities, our Passover."  
 O Jesus, my risen Savior, grant that I may find in Your resurrection a great renewal of faith, hope, and love.

At daybreak on the third day after His death, Jesus came forth from the sepulcher, His glorified body passing through the stone that closed the entrance to the tomb. Pilate's seal was on that stone and a guard had been set to see that it remained unbroken. The seal was still intact and the stone unmoved, but Jesus was free. The end of His earthly mission resembled its commencement. He emerged from the sepulcher in the manner in which He had come forth from the virginal womb of Mary—as a ray of light passing through crystal. And again, as when Jesus expired on the cross, the earth trembled, but now it was for joy. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, and drawing near rolled back the stone and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment like snow. And for fear of him the guards were terrified, and became like dead men. To the violence of Christ's enemies the angels now opposed their own victorious power. Then, after the guards, by the divine mercy, recovered their senses, they

hurried to the city to report the empty tomb. Thus, even against their will, the leaders of the people were given a revelation, as it were, of the Resurrection; and their informants were the very ones whom they themselves had placed at the tomb to forestall any attempt at deceit.

Meanwhile, Jesus, the Son of God and Vanquisher of death, but also the Son of Mary, had hastened to His most holy Mother. She had stood beside the cross, uniting the sacrifice of her mother's heart with His sacrifice; it was right that she should be the first to share the joy of the Resurrection. The Gospel does not record this apparition of Jesus to His Mother; there was no need of it, for this first visit of our risen Savior was prompted solely by love—the love of Jesus and Mary for each other. It was not intended to serve as a proof of the Resurrection, as were the other manifestations, fully described in the Gospel, to the holy women and the Apostles and disciples. The Fathers of the Church, however, beginning with St. Ambrose, testify to this first visit of Jesus to His Mother; even had they been silent, every Christian heart would have of itself reached this conviction. Who that knows Jesus and Mary would refuse to accept such a tradition? And who would not accept also the pious belief that our Savior rose so early from the tomb on Easter day in order to satisfy the ardent longings of His dear and most afflicted Mother? If her prayers had hastened the moment of the Incarnation and that of the public miracles of her Son, was it not fitting that she should have hastened also the commencement of His risen life?

Mary, dearest Mother, who would attempt to describe the joy of this first meeting with your risen Son? Your gladness now is a just reward for the unwavering faith in the Resurrection that dwelt in your heart during the three days when all except you

The mystery of the Resurrection is the foundation of our faith and our hope; it is also a symbol representing a true conversion of the soul, a spiritual resurrection. Like the resurrection of Christ, every sincere conversion is real, manifest, and lasting. Our rebirth to the life of divine grace from the life of nature and self-seeking should be as true and incontestable as the resurrection of our divine Model. The great truth that Jesus really arose from the dead is supported by His own predictions, by His apparitions to the disciples and the holy women, by the testimony of St. Thomas, who was permitted to put his finger in the place of the wounds, and

"He has risen, he is not here" (Mk. 16:6).  
 Represent to yourself the glorified humanity of the Word made flesh.  
 O my Savior, risen from the dead, may Your resurrection be for me the model of a new life.

### *Spiritual Resurrection*

APRIL 13

had lost it. Your eyes, dimmed by wakefulness and tears, now flash with delight on beholding the brightness which announces the coming of Jesus. He calls you by name in tones of joy and love. He embraces you with the most tender filial affection. That body which only three days ago you saw dead and covered with blood is now radiant with life and shining with divinity. My good Mother, obtain for me from Jesus a steadfast faith, courageous hope, and love that is ardent and selfless like yours.

by the more than five hundred witnesses who saw Jesus ascend into heaven.

The resurrection of our Savior was a true resurrection before God and men. As we contemplate this glorious dogma with the eyes of faith, let us see whether we too have arisen without disguise and hypocrisy from the life of nature to the life of grace; whether there is really nothing in our hearts that is contrary to the law of God and our Rule; whether any reservations belie the total sacrifice we made of ourselves by our three vows. A true Sister of the Holy Cross has nothing in common with the children of this world. She has no longer any concern with the occupations and pleasures of those who are dead in the eyes of faith; she thinks, speaks, and acts like the living, that is, like the saints, like Jesus Himself.

The resurrection of our Savior was also evident and manifest; for, in order to convince His disciples that He had truly risen from the dead, He assumed a sensible corporeal form and even allowed the disciples to touch Him. Our spiritual renewal should also be such that even a close observation of our conduct would not reveal anything that would belie the reality of the change. There is a certain air of recollection and reserve, a certain way of speaking and acting, which reveal the new and supernaturalized dispositions of the heart. Again, our risen Savior will die no more; He dwells eternally in glory and triumph. Unlike Lazarus, who was miraculously brought forth from the tomb, Jesus will not re-enter the grave. If we are to imitate Him in the order of grace, we must never fall back into our former carelessness and sinful habits. This permanent change we can achieve with the help of God. Let us beg Jesus through Mary's intercession the grace of advancing steadily toward perfection.

"O fragrant Flower of the Virgin-Branch, filled with the dew of the seven Gifts, ruddy as the rose and fair as the lily! Whence that merciful design which made Thee stoop to help this little world, sharing our nature, that Thou mightest redeem unhappy mankind, and taking the likeness of sin, O Thou, the sinless One?

"Sovereign Lord, who hast made Thyself the Brother of Thy creature, man! O Hope of our ultimate resurrection and eternal glorification! We beseech Thee, by the promise made to Abraham's seed, give us strength . . . and make us who were sharers in our first parents' death to be fellow-members of Thy life. Unite our weakness with Thy strength and grant us, O blessed Paschal Lamb, the pastures of eternal life" (from a medieval German Sequence).

APRIL 14

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### *The Apparition to Mary Magdalene*



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"Now when he had risen from the dead early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils" (Mk. 16:9).

Let us try to imagine and to share the sentiments of St. Mary Magdalene at the moment when Jesus made Himself known to her.

Lord Jesus, deign to fill my soul with lasting spiritual joy.

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Not without reason does the Church, borrowing the words of the Psalmist, term the day of the Resurrection pre-eminently the "day of the Lord"; for Jesus, rising from the dead, was Himself the beautiful dawn which heralded the dispersion of

our darkness. We should, therefore, celebrate with deep spiritual joy and extraordinary solemnity not only the glorious feast of Easter, but also the seven weeks that follow it, like a prolonged octave leading us to Pentecost. The spirit of the Church during these fifty days is one of triumphant joy, which continually bursts forth in the liturgy of the Paschal season.

Holy Mother Church especially directs our attention during this period to the manifestations of Jesus during the forty days preceding the feast of the Ascension, that we may be constantly reminded of the new life we must lead in order to rise with our divine Master. The first apparition of Jesus mentioned in the Gospel was to St. Mary Magdalene. But she, entirely preoccupied with her desire to anoint the dead body of her Lord, did not recognize Him in the "gardener" whom she met at the tomb. Her love itself distracted her, for it was a love not sufficiently guided by faith. Her longing to find Jesus as she thought Him to be prevented her from seeing Him as He really was—living and real. He called her by name; and the single word "Mary" in the tones she knew so well was enough. "Master!" exclaimed the enraptured and humble Magdalene. All was now clear; she believed. Mary Magdalene, as a reward for her love and fidelity, became the first witness of the Resurrection, the bearer of the good news to the Apostles. Still other apparitions followed on that first Easter day: to the Magdalene's companions, Salome and Mary, the mother of James, to Peter and John, to the disciples of Emmaus, to the Apostles gathered in the upper room. But even before the men whom the Son of God had deigned to make His Apostles, He honored the generous women who had been faithful to Him during His passion. At this peak of His earthly glory He made three humble women the

heralds of His triumph, just as He had first summoned to His crib the poor shepherds of Bethlehem.

How true are the inspired words of Isaias: *My thoughts are not your thoughts; nor your ways my ways, saith the Lord!* We should have summoned the whole world—kings and people—to pay homage at the crib; we should have proclaimed immediately to all nations the resurrection of the Crucified, the victory won over death, the restoration of mankind to their heavenly inheritance. But He who is the *power and wisdom of God*, Christ Jesus our Lord, did not even begin at once to instruct His Apostles. He first consoled and affectionately honored the humble and courageous women who had followed Him to Calvary.

“Universal Conqueror! Thou hast vanquished death and entered into the joys of heaven. O mercy of Christ, how great, how sublime, how beautiful, how sweet, how tender art Thou! . . . Purchased by the blood of the infinitely merciful Lamb, the Church glitters with the ruby flowers of her redemption. . . . O Jesus, our merciful King, forgive us our sins, loose our fetters. Grant that Thy elect may rise with Thee to heavenly glory, and to their merits give recompense” (from an Easter Sequence of the Middle Ages).

APRIL 15

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### *The Visitations of Jesus*



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“To them also he showed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, during forty days appearing to them and speaking of the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3).

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Imagine that you are in the Cenacle at the moment when our Savior appears to St. Thomas, or at the tomb, when He shows Himself to St. Mary Magdalene, or with the disciples of Emmaus, when they recognize Him in the breaking of the bread.

Divine Savior, grant that from now on I may profit fully by the visits of Your grace.

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To whom does our risen Savior appear? To the holy women, the Apostles, and certain of the disciples; that is, to the humble and fervent. And such still, ordinarily, are the souls whom Jesus deigns to visit, and even, sometimes, to favor with sensible manifestations of His presence; for the humble and the fervent are disposed to receive the divine light with faith and be led by it. Jesus assumed the appearance of a gardener for Mary Magdalene, and of a wayfarer for the disciples of Emmaus; but by a word, a gesture, which escaped Him, as it were, they recognized their Lord and their hearts were instantly transported with love. If His nearness is not always sensibly felt and made certain to us, we may yet discern it by the peace and serenity which His visits bring to our souls. We know it by the joy and consolation with which they are filled, just as the disciples were *glad* when they saw the Lord. The spirit of darkness, on the contrary, fills us with gloomy, troubled, and discouraged thoughts, with fear and dejection. It would be well for us to ask ourselves which of these influences is uppermost in our daily thoughts and actions; if we are an easy prey to moods of depression and sadness, the reason may often be found in our pride and our want of ardor in serving God.

The apparitions of Jesus were intended, among other purposes, to confirm the wavering faith of the Apostles, to prepare

them for a long separation, and to give them courage to undertake all things for their Master's glory. So it was that Thomas, the most unbelieving of the Twelve and also the one favored with the most striking proof of the reality of the Resurrection, gave evidence later of exceptional faith. No other Apostle preached with more zeal nor in more distant regions, for Thomas brought the Gospel even to remote India where, according to tradition, he suffered martyrdom. Jesus favors us also, and many times with the visits of His grace; but, perhaps, a want of recollection or of generosity or of faith prevents us from responding fully to His mercies toward us. Let us endeavor to realize how unworthy we are to receive the divine gifts and determine to remove at any cost the obstacles which may now be impeding the flow of grace into our souls.

O divine Master, it is my want of humility and my lukewarmness that prevent me from recognizing Your action in all that happens to me. Like the disciples of Emmaus I am often disconcerted by the cross. Perhaps my courage and faith, like theirs, frequently depend in some measure upon felt or external evidences of success. Let not my understanding of heavenly things, especially of the mystery of the cross, be obscured by self-love, distractiveness, or a want of detachment. Deign, O Jesus, to instruct me interiorly as to the sinful habit or inordinate attachment which most impedes my growth in Your grace; and in Your mercy help me to remove it completely and permanently from my soul.

## *The Disciples of Emmaus*



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“And behold two of them were going that very day to a village called Emmaus, which is sixty stadia from Jerusalem. And they were talking to each other about all these things that had happened” (Lk. 24:13, 14).

In the afternoon of Easter day, two disciples, one of whom was named Cleophas, left Jerusalem for the village Emmaus, about seven miles northwest of the city.

Divine Master, take from me the aversion for the cross, which is so deeply rooted in my nature.

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The two disciples, returning, perhaps, to their home, were conversing together as they walked along of their mutual disillusionment. The Master was dead. He whom they had regarded as a great prophet, the true Savior of Israel, had died ignominiously, condemned by the chief authorities of the nation. His work was ruined, His Messianic mission a complete failure. His death was for these disciples the proof of this fact. It was now the third day and He had not yet attested His resurrection by a triumphant apparition to accomplish the deliverance of Israel. Reports of the empty tomb and the claims of some women that angels had appeared to them only confused and perplexed Cleophas and his companion. To them it seemed impossible to reconcile the death of the Savior on the cross with the idea they had formed of the Messiah. Indeed, never was the Church to know a darker hour than that through which she was then passing. Yet, at that very moment especially was it necessary to hope.

It was the mystery of the cross which disconcerted the disciples of Emmaus and troubled their minds and hearts. This was why our Savior called them "*foolish ones and slow of heart to believe*."

Our Savior joined the travelers without making Himself known, perhaps in the guise of a pilgrim returning home after the Paschal celebration. His words, full of instruction and consolation, showed them that His passion and death had not been unexpected, nor were they to be thought of as a catastrophe or a defeat. Centuries before they had been foretold by the prophets and in the history of Israel. He was the Messias precisely because He had suffered. Then Jesus unfolded before them the divine plan of the Redemption which He summed up in the words, "*Did not the Christ have to suffer these things before entering into his glory?*" With what condescension and amiability our Savior did all this! Of His own accord He approached the two travelers, questioned them kindly as to the cause of their dejection, and expounded the Holy Scripture at length for them in a manner so sublime that their hearts burned within them. Yet they were not Apostles, but simple disciples.

Then He accepted their invitation to sit at table with them and there He revealed His glory in the breaking of the bread. Some of the Fathers believe that the Savior gave the disciples His sacred Body in the Eucharist. The table of repast thus became an altar and the invited Guest manifested Himself as the glorious High Priest of the New Testament. The disciples owed their great privilege, first, to the goodness of our Savior, who is ever ready to help and console those who encounter the cross in His service. They also merited it by their faithful attachment to Jesus, by the reverent manner in which they spoke of Him, and, finally,

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"I know that my Vindicator lives, and that he will at last stand forth upon the dust. Whom I myself shall see, and not another — and from my flesh I shall see God; my inmost being is consumed with longing" (Job 19:25-27). These words were uttered by holy Job when he was in utter abandonment and in the most painful physical suffering. Divine Redeemer, grant me a living and practical faith in the resurrection of the body.

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## *The Hope of Our Resurrection*

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APRIL 17

by their hospitable and grateful invitation. To our charity toward others Jesus responds by exercising His charity toward us. Hope was now reborn in the hearts of the disciples; they rose from the table and returned immediately to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven assembled and to the new reports of the apparition of Jesus to Simon they added their account of what had happened to them and how they recognized the Lord in the breaking of the bread. O my Savior, I adore Your great goodness and Your tender care for Your own which You reveal in this mystery. You know each one of us. You are ever present with us to instruct and console. How important is Your teaching! It speaks of the cross in Your life, in the life of the Church, in the life of each of us. Always the cross, the inevitable, inexplicable cross! How carefully You removed for Your disciples the scandal of the cross, which is imbedded in our nature! Deign to instruct me also that I may learn the great gain there is for me in suffering and humiliation.

The sensual man, to use St. Paul's term, may accept the doctrine of the bodily resurrection as an article of faith, but it is not for him the conscious object of his hope. He regards his body as an instrument of self-gratification which, since it lives for so short a time, must be the more fully and quickly gratified. He is, in reality, the enemy of his body; and yet the charge of being hostile to man's bodily nature is the one that is most often brought against the Church. But how could the body be accorded a deeper respect, the characteristic of true love, than that given it by Holy Mother Church? She it is who teaches us the great truth that the human body is destined for endless glory and happiness and who instructs us how to make it serve *justice unto sanctification*. In its last moments she honors the body with the sacred oils of Extreme Unction; she burns incense over it in death as over a holy thing; and to those who love the

with their radiant souls!

Jesus, by *swallowing up death*, as the Apostle St. Peter strongly expresses it, made possible the fulfillment of Job's hope and the hope of all mankind. His death removed from our own its bitterness and humiliation; henceforth, the grave would be viewed under a new aspect. The earth which receives the bodies of the dead will one day yield them up, as it yields the planted seed, a hundredfold. At the sound of the archangel's trumpet the whole human race will rise from the grave and proclaim the final defeat of death. One of the joys of the angels in heaven is gazing upon the glorified human bodies of Jesus and Mary—of Jesus who even as Man is their King and of Mary whom they serve as their Queen. What a day of festival it will be for these angelic spirits when they just are clothed again with the robe of their flesh, sanctified, and made worthy of reunion

departed she addresses the consoling words of St. Paul, who admonishes us not to grieve *even as others who have no hope*.

What is this hope? It is that which comforted Job: *and from my flesh I shall see God*. The soul is more than the body, it is true, but the body is an essential part of our being and, like the soul, it has a sublime destiny; we should, therefore, treat our body with reverence. If we now chastise it and keep it under subjection, it is because its present state requires such treatment. We punish the body because we love it. Let us, by faith, contemplate the glorious future for which God has created us, body and soul; only the light of faith can enable us to penetrate this mystery on earth. And faith, in turn, quickens love and hope, as we reflect upon what the Son of God has done for our bodies as well as our souls by His resurrection from the dead.

*Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done wondrous deeds; his right hand has won victory for him, his holy arm. The Lord has made his salvation known: in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice. He has remembered his kindness and faithfulness toward the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation by our God (Ps. 97:1-3).*

APRIL 18

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## *Our Lady and the Church*



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“Because she was the mother of all the living” (Gen. 3:20).

These words of Genesis referring to Eve are spiritually applicable only to Mary, the Mother of God and our Mother.

O Mary, teach me to recognize and love the Church as the earthly counterpart of you, my dearest Mother.

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In interpreting the Holy Scripture it is often difficult to determine whether the direct reference, especially in the Old Testament, is to the Mother or to the Church of Christ. Our Lady and the Church merge in the sacred writings into a mystical unity. As early as the second century St. Clement of Alexandria wrote with reference to our Lady, "One only Mother Virgin! Dear it is to me to call her the Church." Mary represented the Christian Church before it existed in itself. She was not only the Mother of the Incarnate Son of God, but also the faithful worshiper of His divinity from the first moment of the Incarnation. We saw on Holy Saturday how Mary's faith stood the test of Calvary, and how her unfaltering faith kept alive on earth the light never to be extinguished which would be confided to the Church. Our Lady also represented and personified the Church in her obedience: "*Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word*"; in her prayer, as at Cana: "*They have no wine*"; in her submission to Christ, "*Do whatever he tells you*"; and in her faithfulness to our Savior to the end. Mary was in her single person what the Church collectively has been from the day of its establishment.

As Jesus wills, since His ascension into heaven, to permit the co-operation of the Church in all that He does for the elect, so, during His mortal life, Mary shared in all that the Savior did for our salvation. She, whose formal consent had been required before the Eternal Word took flesh in her womb, was present at the foot of the cross, so that she as a creature might offer Him who offered Himself as God,

our Redeemer. The Mother's sacrifice was united with that of the Son, and Mary was thereby raised to a degree of merit which the human mind is entirely unable to comprehend.

On the day of Pentecost the maternity of the Church would be proclaimed to the world. Mary was invested with the office of Mother of mankind when Jesus hung upon the cross. Soon we shall contemplate her in the Cenacle where she will be enriched with new gifts in view of her mission in the early Church; and ever since her Assumption our heavenly Mother has continued to assist our earthly Mother the Church. She continues to exercise her maternal power and love on behalf of the entire Communion of Saints. "His Mother is the whole Church," said St. Augustine, "because, through the grace of God, everywhere she gives birth to the faithful of Christ." Mary, by her all-powerful intercession, procures for us the grace of supernatural birth and growth, and the Church makes accessible to us the channels of these divine gifts, namely, the sacraments and the word of God. If we shall rejoice in heaven at seeing the glories of the Church triumphant, who could describe the joy we shall have in beholding the splendor and majesty of the Mother who bore us in Christ?

"Rejoice, O spotless Mother, in that thou didst conceive of the Holy Ghost and bring forth thy Child as the star emits its rays. Grant us fruitfulness also in the works of salvation. Take these barren hearts of ours and by thy merciful prayers make them fertile" (from an ancient German Sequence).

## *The Repentant Thomas*



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“Then he said to Thomas, ‘Bring here thy finger and see my hands; and bring here thy hand and put it into my side; and be not unbelieving but believing.’ Thomas answered and said to him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” (Jn. 20:27, 28)

Witness in spirit this apparition of Jesus to the incredulous Thomas.

O Jesus, grant me the grace of growing daily in supernatural faith.

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Faith in the divinity of Jesus is the first requirement for sharing in the divine life. This faith comprises all other revealed truths. The leading instruction in the Gospel for the octave day of Easter is the lesson in faith taught by Jesus to the Apostle Thomas and through him to us all. Jesus said to Thomas, *“Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.”* It might seem to us that the attitude of Thomas was that of a circumspect and prudent man, one who was slow to believe a report. There would appear to be no great fault in his insistence upon experimental evidence before accepting so great a miracle as the Resurrection; but let us reflect upon the grave, even though merciful, remonstrance of Jesus. Stubbornness and incredulity in matters of faith are deserving of punishment; even though Jesus had so far condescended to the weakness of His disciple as to accept the condition upon which alone he declared he would

believe, even though Thomas now stood trembling with awe and love before his risen Master, Jesus rebuked him for his reluctant faith.

Thomas had heard the predictions of the passion and of His resurrection from the dead from the lips of Jesus Himself; he had heard the testimony of Mary Magdalene, of Peter, and of the other Apostles and disciples; but Thomas had to see for himself. How like him we are! To the motives we already possess for belief in the provident care of God for us and for all men, we sometimes wish God to add others, even miracles worked especially for us. Again, like Thomas, we are in danger of offending God unless our faith possesses that certain expansiveness which makes us view all things in a supernatural light, thus preparing us more and more to receive the precious fruit of supernatural faith—an abundance of interior light and joy.

But let us learn also from the repentant Thomas how to exercise our faith. Through the most gracious and merciful condescension of Jesus, Thomas was brought to realize the sinfulness of his unbelief, and he cried out with the ardor of living faith, "*My Lord and my God!*" Thus, he addressed Jesus not only as his Lord and Master who had chosen him to be one of the Twelve; this would not have been a true act of faith, since that which can be seen and touched does not require the exercise of faith. But from what was now visible to him his soul rose, generous and repentant, to the invisible and the divine; and he acknowledged Jesus also as his God. By this profession of faith Thomas more than compensated for his former unbelief; he even surpassed by it the rest of the Apostles, who at this time were more taken up with the visible glory than with the invisible divinity of their risen Lord.

"O Son begotten of the unbegotten Father! . . . we . . . beseech Thee to grant that the faith whereby we believe may present us before Thee after this life, free from sin. May neither sloth engender, nor indiscreet prying foster any misgiving of doubt or error concerning Thee. Preserve in Thy name those whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy precious blood. Let our souls contemplate Thee and vouchsafe to enter our hearts. O Thou who . . . appeared in the midst of Thy disciples and greeted them with peace, abide ever with us. Thou who breathed upon them the Spirit of Life, grant us the consolation of the same Holy Spirit" (from a prayer of the Gothic liturgy).

APRIL 20

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### *The Glorified Wounds of Jesus*



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"What are these wounds in the midst of my hands?" (Zach. 13:6.) These words of the prophet Zacharias are applied in an accommodated sense to Christ in the liturgy of the Church.

O divine Savior, may the memory of Your sacred wounds impress deeply upon my heart sorrow for my sins and confidence in Your mercy.

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The glorified body of our risen Lord bears the marks of the wounds made by the nails and the lance. They are as visible and deep as when He was first taken down from the cross. "*Bring here thy finger . . .*" said Jesus, holding out His hands to Thomas, "*and bring here thy hand and put it into my side.*" The incredulity of this Apostle was thus made the occasion of another incontestable proof of the

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Resurrection. It is this incident also which assures us that when our Savior rose from the dead He bore still in His body the stigmata of the crucifixion. And what He was at the moment of the Resurrection, this He is forever. For all eternity He will retain the sacred wounds. They are an everlasting memorial of His victory over death; and so great a glory streams from them that heaven itself is dazzled by it. According to certain Fathers of the Church, the martyrs who have followed Christ and have been, like Him, victorious over death, will also shine eternally with a special brightness in those parts of their bodies which have suffered torture in imitation of Christ and for love of Him.

Furthermore, it is by ever showing to the Father His sacred wounds that Jesus, our Mediator, averts from us the thunderbolts of divine Justice and causes mercy to triumph over judgment. O precious Wounds, the handiwork of our sins, but now the ground of our hope! With the angels of heaven I adore you shining in glory and perpetually interceding for us with the Father. The day will come when the sacred stigmata will be shown again to mankind, and many will look upon them with fear; *they shall look upon me, whom they have pierced*, said Zacharias in prophecy. For the wicked those wounds of Jesus will dart forth the lightnings of angry justice, but for those who have spent the Easters of their earthly pilgrimage rising to a holy life, they will be a source of mercy and gladness on that dread day. "Where can I who am weak find security and rest," exclaimed St. Bernard, "if not in the wounds of Jesus. The greater His power to save, the more secure am I in my dwelling there. . . . The secret of His heart is laid bare in the wounds of His body; the great mystery of mercy is revealed. . . . What could show me more clearly than Thy wounds, O Lord,

that *thou art good and kind, full of mercy for all that call upon thee?*"

"O God, who, by the passion of Thy only-begotten Son and by the shedding of His precious blood through His five wounds, restored human nature when it was lost by sin, grant us, we beseech Thee, that we who venerate on earth the wounds suffered by Him may be found worthy to obtain in heaven the fruits of that same Precious Blood" (Roman Missal).

APRIL 21

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### *The Peace of Christ*



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"Peace be to you!" (Jn. 20:19.)

In spirit enter with Jesus the room where the disciples were gathered behind closed doors *for fear of the Jews.*

My risen Savior, grant me the grace of an abiding interior peace.

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*Jesus came and stood in the midst and said to them, "Peace be to you!"* These words of Jesus do not represent merely the salutation customary among the Jews. The greeting He here extends to His own signifies that peace which He Himself won for them by His bitter passion and death. It is the very precious grace which makes the soul despise the pleasures of the world and of sense and which raises it above the sadness and discouragement that come from self-love. This peace establishes the soul in tranquillity by preserving it from that overeagerness and those preoccupations which lead to trouble and disquietude. Unless we possess in our souls this peace of Christ, we cannot pray efficaciously

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for divine lights and favors, or hear the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Our hearts cannot at one and the same time contain the things of earth and those of heaven.

If we do not check the irregular movements of the soul at their very beginning, we shall discover within our minds and hearts at the time of prayer only the agitation which will have entered there beforehand. It may be merely a plan which we have formed and which we have an impatient eagerness to execute without delay. It may be an occupation to which we have given ourselves with too much natural enthusiasm, or a humiliation which we believe we have received, or a feeling of irritation and discontent. It may even be the anticipation of innocent recreation which we desire too intensely and which we shall enter upon with too great an outpouring of the heart. When we are disturbed within, our prayer, far from being able to *pierce the clouds* and draw down heavenly blessings, only adds to our guilt because of the impatience and reluctance with which we pray. A gentle solicitude for preserving interior peace is necessary, then, if we are to compose ourselves for prayer and attend to the Lord's voice. Ordinarily, it is to recollected souls that Jesus deigns to speak. External solitude also is conducive to peace, interior calm, and recollection. Our divine Master teaches us this when He tells us that if we would converse with our heavenly Father, we should enter our chamber, close the door, and pray there in secret. But she who has learned to live in interior solitude will hear the voice of her Spouse even in the midst of absorbing external occupations; for she will have in the depths of her soul that peace of Christ which the world can neither give nor take away. On the other hand, one who habitually gives full sway to troubled and distracted thoughts will not enjoy

Jesus showed us the way to true peace when He said, "Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart and you will find rest for your souls." We shall find peace, then, if, putting this divine lesson into practice, we stifle at its source our natural desire for the esteem of others. Once we are liberated from our anxiety over human judgments, we

"Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart" (Mt. 11:29). Hear our divine Savior addressing these words to you. O Jesus, infuse into my soul those virtues which will put me in possession of Your peace.



### *Ways to Interior Peace*

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this happiness even when she is alone, even before the altar itself. If you seldom hear Jesus speaking to you in prayer, if your spiritual exercises hold no attraction for you, perhaps it is because you have allowed yourself to become preoccupied with various earthly desires and projects. Unless you do violence to yourself you cannot maintain recollection. Persistent effort is needed to control the imagination, to mortify the senses, and to rise above yourself. O good Jesus, grant me a constant increase of that interior peace which is so necessary for me if I am to profit by Your grace. Help me to avoid with prudence the occasions of unnecessary distraction. Enable me, O Jesus, to resist firmly the temptations that present themselves during prayer and to apply myself steadily and with a good will to the work of self-conquest.

shall remain untroubled and calm, despite the varied and shifting opinions of those about us. We shall be concerned only with that which God sees in us and with His judgment of our actions. Only let us be humble, truly humble, and we shall have peace in our souls and rest and joy. Whence come, for the most part, the little pains that disturb our interior calm? Is it not from self-love, which exaggerates the good that is in us and the evil that is in others, which makes us unduly sensitive to slight injuries and humiliations? Is it not wounded pride that most often keeps us from responding to our Savior's loving invitation?

Another means of acquiring or increasing interior peace is the singlehearted love of God. It may be said that herein all is comprised, for he who loves fulfills the whole law. We are made to love and to be loved; we must have a friend, but our best and dearest friend can only be Jesus. Jesus knows we have need of Him and that we cannot be happy without Him; and so He has neglected nothing that might serve to win our love. No means of proving His love for us was too painful, too abject and humiliating for Him, if only He might attract our love in return. And for all that He has done for us He asks only that we come to Him freely, as children to their father. He begs us, as it were, to allow Him to soothe our pains, to sweeten the bitterness of life, and give us the rest which we shall vainly seek elsewhere. Let us go to Him, then, and like St. John the Beloved and innumerable holy souls find in His Heart our treasures of peace and consolation.

A third aid toward peace of soul is obedience joined with prayer; obedience, first of all, to the Rule. "Apply yourself, my son, to do rather the will of another than your own and you will arrive at true peace," says the *Imitation of*

“He breathed upon them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.’” (Jn. 20:23). On the evening of Easter day our Savior bestowed upon the Apostles an essential power of the priesthood: the forgiveness of sins. He breathed upon them the immortal breath that is the Holy Spirit to show in an external manner that the Holy Spirit is the Principle and the Dispenser of all authority in the Church.



### *The Sacrament of Penance*

APRIL 23

*Christ.* What a source of interior consolation it would be for you if you could truly say of yourself, “I love my God as I am loved by Him. I do always that which He desires of me.” Insofar as you are faithful to your Rule you can say this with confidence and without fear of self-deception, for to love His will is to love God. The Rule is for you the expression of His will. To the obedience of a well-disciplined life let us add our supplications that interior peace be granted us, uniting our intention with that of the Church who prays repeatedly for this grace in her liturgy: “Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, grant us peace”; “Grant, O Lord, to thy servants that peace which the world cannot give.”

“O God, the giver of peace and the lover of charity, grant unto Thy servants a perfect union with Thy will, that we may be delivered from all temptations that beset us” (Roman Missal).

Divine Savior, help me to receive the Sacrament of Penance more fruitfully.

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We who are obliged by Rule to go to confession frequently and who faithfully keep this Rule are well aware of its importance. But it is profitable for us to reflect occasionally upon the benefits of frequent confession, so that we may make better use of our opportunity. One of the most efficacious means of avoiding sin and of advancing solidly and rapidly in virtue is to have recourse often and fruitfully to the Sacrament of Penance. The oftener the soul reflects upon itself in a serious examination of conscience, the more clear-sighted it becomes in detecting its faults and the more eager to blot them out by penance.

The Sacrament of Penance, frequently and well received, also imparts a constant renewal of fervor. A flame grows dim unless it is tended and piety, however ardent, will lose its warmth unless it is fed and developed. Nothing serves so well to keep our souls in good condition as the constant rekindling and stirring up of our fervor that result from frequent and good confession. The oftener we approach this sacrament the more we shall receive of its grace; and it is the holy movements of grace that animate fervor. The oftener we go to confession worthily, the more will our minds be filled with good thoughts and our wills with lively affections; and such thoughts and affections are the proper fuel for the fire of piety. We do not leave the confessional without carrying away a certain unction that seeps into our hearts and fills us with an interior and heavenly gladness. After a good confession we feel interiorly recollected and joyful, our spiritual pace is quickened by a new ardor, we run along the path of perfection.

Yet, there is danger in frequent confession of the spirit of routine. The members of a religious community are protected by many safeguards, by the vigilance of their Superiors, and the prescriptions of their Rule; therefore, when confession is frequent, the matter should ordinarily be light. There is, consequently, a tendency to confess without contrition or without a firm purpose of amendment, and so without utility for the soul. We must take great care with regard to this matter, so that we may not leave the confessional more guilty in the sight of God than when we entered it. The sins we confess may be venial, but we are strictly obliged to have sincere repentance for at least one sin confessed and to form a strong resolution of avoiding it for the future. To make sure of the proper contrition it is well to add some past sin for which we are truly sorry. Another means of checking the fatal spirit of routine is to make known to our confessor in addition to our daily falls the actual state of our dispositions, the efforts we are making, the good or bad will we feel within us. If we would ask ourselves seriously before confession, "What is my real state in the eyes of God?"; if we really gave an account to ourselves and to God, then we should find in this great sacrament the mercy and peace which our Savior intended us to find therein.

O Lord, You have promised us the forgiveness of our sins if we sincerely do penance for them. Grant me, if You so will, the right to know the sins I have committed, humility to accuse myself strictly of them, love to feel contrition for them, and grace to avoid them in the future.

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*Apparition of Jesus at Lake Tiberias*



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“After these things Jesus manifested himself again at the sea of Tiberias. . . . He said to them: ‘Cast the net to the right of the boat’” (Jn. 21:1, 6).

This is the first time our Savior appeared in Galilee and the third time that He showed Himself to several Apostles together.

Lord Jesus, instill into me a loyal and active love of the Church and enable me to inspire it in others.

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The second occurrence of the miraculous catch of fish contains several new and consoling features. The number of fish appears to have been greater than the first time, yet the net does not break. The Church, we are to infer, can extend without danger her conquest of souls through the apostolic ministry. Also, instead of withdrawing as before in sentiments of reverential fear, Peter, hearing from John that it was indeed the Lord who waited on the shore, now cast himself into the sea in order to reach Him the sooner. The intimate repast shared by our Savior with His Apostles on the shore prefigures the recompense reserved for the apostolic ministry in eternity. Here, as in eternity, weariness, the labors of the night, are succeeded by repose in a secure haven. Here, as in eternity, the Savior is the center and source of joy. He associates with His own, He Himself participates in their gladness. All are ravished by His goodness, all recognize Him and *none of those reclining dared ask him, “Who art thou?” knowing that it was the Lord.*

But this new apparition of the Savior was granted par-

ticularly in Peter's favor. Up to now the primacy had been simply announced to him. Now the Savior conferred it formally in the presence of several other Apostles. In all its plenitude and majesty He bestowed upon Peter a dignity which belonged to him exclusively, a mission truly divine in origin and nature, whereby Peter was to represent Jesus Himself. "*Feed my lambs,*" He said to him. His mission was divine also in extent. All the sheep of the Good Shepherd, His whole flock, were committed to Peter's care. The condition upon which the primacy was conferred upon Peter was also laid down. This condition was love, for only by a great and humble love can the care of souls be exercised in a Christian manner.

The mission of the Apostles was to be exposed to every sort of contradiction and persecution, since it was amid such trials that our Savior had accomplished the work entrusted to Him. Before His death He had warned them that He was sending them *as lambs among wolves*, that they would be *hated by all* for His name's sake, for "*no disciple is above his teacher, nor is the servant above his master.*" "Oh, how much love is necessary never to be discouraged and always to bear patiently the crosses of this state of life," wrote François de Fénelon, Archbishop of Cambrai, to a friend who was to be elevated to the episcopate. "It is easy enough for those shepherds who only take care of the flock for the sake of the milk and the wool, but it is terrible for those who devote themselves entirely to the salvation of souls."

How shall I worthily thank You, O God, my Savior, for allowing me to be a member of Your Church from the time of my entrance into this world! It is by her and in her alone that I am able to live the supernatural life. Continue Your mercies toward me, O my God, and grant me to remain a loyal

daughter of the Church until death. Show also Your goodness and merciful condescension to those souls who have come to know the true faith, but whose entrance into the Church will require painful sacrifices. Strengthen them and give them courage. Make Your Bride, O divine Master, that which You have said she is to be, *the joyful mother of children*.

APRIL 25

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### *The Coming of the Holy Spirit*



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“I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh” (Joel 2:28).

These words of the prophet Joel foretell the coming of the Holy Spirit.

O Holy Spirit, Father of the poor, grant me your consolations.

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The reign of the Holy Spirit on earth was to begin only when the God-Man should be enthroned at the right hand of the Father; yet we must not conclude from this that the Paraclete had been inactive with regard to mankind until then. Holy Scripture itself, from which the sacred liturgy draws the sublime instruction it imparts to us, is composed of the words of Him who *spoke by the prophets*. And as through His operation we have the word of God in Scripture, so also through Him the Word was made flesh. Again, it was the Spirit of the Father and the Son who rested upon the sacred humanity of Jesus, enriching the Child of Mary with gifts incomparably greater than those even which she, the Mother, had received from Him; yet the treasures of grace bestowed upon her seem to border upon infinity.

Furthermore, on the day of the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, the Spirit hovered visibly in the form of a dove over the well-beloved Son of the Father; but, as the Evangelist St. John tells us, *as yet the Spirit was not given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.* And so the great mystery of the Ascension stands between the two divine reigns on earth: that of the Son of God and that of the Paraclete. Jesus Himself heralded the approaching reign of the Holy Spirit when He said, *"It is expedient for you that I depart. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you."* And that we might form some idea of the great majesty of our new Sovereign, Jesus spoke of the awful chastisements which were to befall those who offended Him: *"Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this world or in the world to come."*

We should, therefore, await the advent of the Spirit of Love who is to *renew the face of the earth* with the same growing expectation and longing with which we looked for the birth of the Savior as the season of Advent was nearing its close. The Word and the Holy Spirit of God are coequal in glory and power and their coming to the earth proceeds from one and the same eternal and merciful decree of the Most Blessed Trinity. It is by the operation of both the Word and the Spirit that we are made *partakers of the divine nature*. Let us not be content with merely acknowledging the existence of the Holy Spirit, but let us try to live in the realization that He acts for us and in us. Daily we should offer Him our gratitude for His gifts of grace—gifts of which we may not even be aware—and we should beg Him to continue His sanctifying work in our souls.

“O divine Paraclete, who proceedest equally from the Father and the Son, with Thy glowing fire, give eloquence to our tongues and make our hearts burn with love of Thee. . . . O Thou who heretofore didst visit, teach, and strengthen the timid disciples, deign to visit us; vouchsafe to console us and the faithful throughout the world” (from a Sequence composed by Adam of St. Victor).

APRIL 26

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*Our Lady, Mother of Good Counsel*



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(See *Festivals and Saints*, p. 808)

APRIL 27

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*Self-Renunciation*



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“But because I have spoken to you these things, sadness has filled your heart” (Jn. 16:6).

In the view of the Apostles the coming and testimony of the Paraclete did not compensate for the absence of their beloved Master.

O Jesus, let me be moved to sadness only when, through my fault, I have lost the sense of Your presence.

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When the Apostles heard their divine Master say that He was about to leave them, they at once became sad. Unable

as yet to think supernaturally they could not understand that the departure of Jesus would be for them a source of good. The loss of His consoling physical presence was to mean for them the great gain of the invisible presence of the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier. The attachment of the Apostles to the person of their Master, although good in itself, was an overly natural affection which would constitute an impediment to the coming of the Holy Spirit. How much greater hindrance to us are those far less praiseworthy and far more inordinate inclinations which keep our hearts bound to creatures, and especially to our own will! For we who are supposed to renounce all must, as a spiritual writer has said, include ourselves among the things to be given up. Let us often reflect upon the words of Jesus: "*If anyone wishes*" — to be a heroic soul? a religious? — no, but "*to come after me,*" that is, simply "to be a follower of mine," "*let him deny himself.*"

To the example of our Savior who, as St. Paul says, *did not please himself* may be added the practice of the Apostles after they were enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Then Peter was no longer presumptuous, Thomas no longer self-opinionated, and John, the Apostle of fraternal love, no longer asked that fire might fall from heaven upon those who would not receive him. The later annals of the Church show us many others who were raised from the life of nature to the life of grace by the practice of self-abnegation: a St. Francis de Sales who, although naturally prone to quick anger and impatience, became a model of meekness; a St. Ignatius, who conquered his impetuosity of temperament by a most rigorous corporal mortification; a St. Francis Xavier, who overcame his inordinate family pride by the practice of abject humility.

We sometimes wonder and with reason why the many

religious in the world produce so little fruit, relatively to their numbers, in the work of the salvation of souls. The key to the mystery is in the words of our Lord: "Unless the grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it remains alone. But if it die, it brings forth much fruit." We are not dead to the world and to ourselves, and therefore we do not bring forth fruit proportionate to our numbers. So much depends upon the difficult but necessary virtue of self-renunciation: our personal sanctity, the success of our works, peace and concord, the union of hearts, wisdom in the exercise of zeal, the glory of the Church.

Lord Jesus, I have given all to You, all that I am and all that I have. Detach me in reality, I beseech You, from all that is created and especially from whatever flatters my pride, my self-will, and my sensuality. How often, good Jesus, do not self-interest, natural motives, the gratification of self-love replace Your pure love within me! Through the intercession of my guardian angel, I ask the grace of instantly making an act of divine love whenever my heart inclines toward self or other creatures.

APRIL 28

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### *The Spirit of Truth*



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"But I speak the truth to you; it is expedient for you that I depart. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you" (Jn. 16:7).

On the eve of His death, Jesus promised the Apostles that He would send them the Holy Spirit.

O Holy Spirit of God, increase my knowledge and love of You.

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It was a divine Person, absolutely equal to Himself, the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who would now carry on the Savior's work. He would be to the Apostles with reference to their mission what Jesus had been to them in their formation as depositories of the faith. They were not as yet placed in full possession of the treasures of the faith. This the Holy Spirit was to accomplish by bringing to their minds all that Jesus had taught them and by teaching them all things; that is, by imparting a most intimate knowledge and understanding of the truths of faith. The Holy Spirit was even to add to the truths which Jesus had committed to the Apostles; for our Savior said, "Many things yet I have to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will teach you all the truth;" The Holy Spirit, that is to say, besides deepening their understanding of the truths of faith, would complete the revelation in the Apostles and

change the face of the earth.

work of their transformation into new men who would death, Jesus foretold the role of the Holy Spirit in the of accomplishing their mission. And so now, before His after the Resurrection they would still be quite incapable understood the teachings of Jesus very imperfectly. Even them to comprehend supernatural truths. The Apostles had transforming their souls by new gifts which would enable the task would still remain of sanctifying mankind and Word of God, had completed the work of the Redeption, *expedient for you that I depart.*" After Jesus, the Incarnate at a most solemn moment, "I speak the truth to you; it is Truth, and the Life, should leave them? Yet He says formally been good or useful for the Apostles that Jesus, the Way, the *"It is expedient for you that I depart."* How could it have

through the Apostles. All the enlightenment given to the Councils and transmitted through the teachings and writings of the Doctors of the Church are the result of this promise of the Savior that the Holy Spirit would come to the Apostles.

This Holy Spirit, this Guide, Consoler, and Dispenser of all gifts, was not only to be with the Apostles, but also in them by the marvelous effects that He would produce in them personally and in their ministry: "*He will dwell with you, and be in you.*" Were not the peace that Jesus gave to His Apostles and left with them and that joy which no one could take away, in reality, the Holy Spirit Himself? For the Holy Spirit is Love; peace and joy, besides being His special gifts, are the effects of love. Soon we shall be commemorating the accomplishment of this marvelous work of the Holy Spirit in the Apostles. Let us prepare ourselves for this anniversary by asking the grace to realize our need of the assistance of the Holy Spirit, especially in understanding and practicing the teachings of Jesus.

"O God, who makest the minds of the faithful to be of one will, grant to Thy people to love that which Thou commandest and desire that which Thou dost promise; that so, among the changing things of this world, our hearts may be set where true joys are to be found" (Roman Missal).

APRIL 29

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### *The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit*



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"The Spirit of truth . . . will dwell with you, and be in you"  
(Jn. 14:17).

By these words Jesus promised His Apostles the indwelling as well as the guidance of the Paraclete.

O Holy Spirit, teach me to grow in the interior life by increasing my union with You present within my soul.

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*"If anyone love me,"* our Savior said further in His farewell discourse to the Apostles, *"he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him."* This mystery along with the others would be incomprehensible to the Apostles until Pentecost when they would be enlightened interiorly by the Paraclete Himself. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit and, conjointly with Him, of the other two Persons of the Trinity in a soul justified by grace, is a most marvelous divine benefaction. That the Holy Spirit was to be the gift of both the Father and the Son was formally asserted by our Savior: *"And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate";* again, *"But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name."* This divine Spirit both comes to us and abides in us. Grace is not given us by itself; it is accompanied by the Holy Spirit, the Author of grace. The Giver comes with His gifts. And when we have received Him, He dwells with us as the protector and guardian of our souls, the cause and source of our supernatural life, and the pledge that we shall one day possess God in the Beatific Vision.

The infinite God is, of course, present to every creature by His essence and by His power; all creation is filled with Him. *In him,* said St. Paul to the Athenians, *we live and move and have our being.* Even if we had not been elevated to the supernatural order, God would be present to us as preserving our existence and concurring in the operation of

our faculties; but to a soul hallowed by grace, God is not only present, He dwells within it. The name, Theophorus, that is, "God-bearer," so dear to the early Christians, is our true name; and such evidences of honor as the incensing which the sacred liturgy accords the faithful on certain occasions is only their due. It is God whom we bear within us who is incensed. Nor should we marvel that God has given us an angel as an escort, since we are temples of the Most Holy Trinity. But the indwelling of the Holy Spirit implies a God present by love and accomplishing the work of sanctification in a soul that is habitually submissive to Him. Even as regards the souls of the just, He does not dwell in all in the same manner. If some souls are further advanced toward perfection than others, it is because they have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them more fully and directing them more completely than others.

O God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, I adore You and thank You for Your unspeakable gift in becoming the Guest of my soul. Teach me how to live in union with You, how to keep my soul quietly mindful of Your presence and always attentive to Your direction. Let me not degrade Your presence in my soul by frivolous, vain, or uncharitable thoughts, or show disrespect for Your presence in the souls of others by haughty and unkind words or actions.

APRIL 30

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### *Sanctifying Grace*



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"The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee" (Lk. 1:35).

In the words, *the power of the Most High*, the archangel Gabriel refers to the operation of the Holy Spirit of God whereby the Word would be made flesh. Man's elevation to a participation in the divine life through the life of grace is also the work of the Paraclete.

Divine Paraclete, give me a deeper understanding of the greatness of Your benefits to my soul.

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When the archangel Gabriel announced to Mary that with her consent she would become the Mother of the Savior, our Lady rightly asked, "*How shall this happen?*" Gabriel replied, "*The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee*"; that is, the mystery of the Incarnation was to be accomplished by the direct action of Divinity. But to elevate man, a creature, to the dignity of a child of God, participating in the divine life and destined to enjoy the happiness of seeing God is quite as impossible, naturally speaking, as was the Incarnation of the Word; and it is again the Holy Spirit who effects this marvel through sanctifying grace. He it was who imparted the life of grace to the first man, but Adam forfeited it, not only for himself, but also for his descendants. It required the incarnation and death of the Son of God to render us capable of receiving again this divine life. The divine filiation produced by the state of grace makes us capable of divine acts, acts impossible for unaided nature; such as, to know God and to love Him, imperfectly here below, it is true, but perfectly in heaven. Grace is the seed of glory; our divinization is on this earth only in its first stage. An heir while he is still a child has not the power of disposing of his property, he merely enjoys its ownership. Similarly, we shall perform perfectly only in heaven those

acts for which we now possess the power; *it has not yet appeared what we shall be*, writes St. John.

It is no less true, however, that even in this life grace elevates the essence of the soul to the point of making it a Godlike being, capable of divine operations. This commencement of the divine life in the soul through sanctifying grace is the first benefit we receive from the Holy Spirit. The grandeur of a soul in the state of grace is completely beyond our powers of conception. Were we ever to behold the beauty of such a soul we should believe that we were seeing God. And the Holy Spirit continues to foster this divine life infused by Him until He has brought it to its full flowering in the life of glory. All supernatural grace is due to the merits of Jesus Christ, but it is infused by the Holy Spirit; and so we say the Father created us, the Son redeemed us, the Holy Spirit sanctifies us. We should not, then, adore Him as if from afar. He is a most intimate Benefactor. At this moment, if there is no obstacle on our part, He is filling our souls with His presence. In the measure that each of our actions is supernaturally performed He increases the sanctifying grace which He first gave to us through Baptism. He is incessantly occupied with our good, preventing and assisting us with actual grace and giving to the sacraments their efficacy. Yet, perhaps we seldom think of His action within our soul; perhaps we are even working against it.

“Holy Spirit, come into my heart; draw it to Thee by Thy power, O my God, and grant me charity with filial fear. Preserve me, O ineffable Love, from every evil thought; warm me, inflame me with Thy dear love, and every pain will seem light to me. My Father, my sweet Lord, help me in all my actions” (prayer of St. Catherine of Siena).