

Thomas A. Kempis
ACA6027

C.2

471685

The Acceptable Time

Daily Readings for Lent

THOMAS A. KEMPIS



New York
THE PAULIST PRESS
401 West 59th Street

THE ACCEPTABLE TIME

Daily Readings For Lent

FROM

THOMAS À KEMPIS

EDITED BY

REV. JOHN J. BURKE, C.S.P.

New York
THE PAULIST PRESS
401 West 59th Street

Deacidified

The Acceptable Time

ASH WEDNESDAY.

BEHOLD *now is the acceptable time: behold now is the day of salvation.* The sacred season of Lent has come, wholesomely instituted by the Church: devoutly to be welcomed by all the faithful of Christ. Prepare thyself, therefore, at this time to live with greater care, to fast more strictly, to pray more often, to praise God with greater diligence. Accept joyfully the cross of the Lord, which the Saviour of the world willingly accepted for thee. For the cross is every affliction of the flesh and every mortification of sensuality. This cross the love and grace of Christ makes light and sweet: Who, by His own example and the example of the saints, has delivered the pattern of abstinence. Fear not, therefore, weak man, nor be too cowardly to fast. Christ is the motive: Christ has given the example: Christ also will aid to finish well. What thou dost is for thyself. Penance thou must do in this brief space of Lent unto the remission of the negligence of thy former life; and afflict thy soul for God as compensation to the divine justice. The fear which thou feelest is thy self-love: more timid than it should be. Often excessive fear and anxiety of heart for the failing of the body, afflict more than the actual fatigue of the toil itself. Let thy soul therefore be strong, and thy will ready. Set before thee now one day, and to-morrow thou shalt more devoutly add another: and thus in God's name thou shalt accomplish the rest. Is not so holy a fast to be deemed all light and brief for the kingdom of God and the love of Christ? Cast aside the fear of the flesh manfully. Walk in the spirit of freedom: and anxiety for the flesh shall not possess thee.

THURSDAY AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA.

AND *Moses went up into the mountain: and he was there forty days and forty nights.* What, thinkest thou, did this holy man there with the Lord? Moses spoke: and the Lord answered. He, therefore, enjoyed there alone the conversation of God, drawn far away from the fellowship of men. There he received the law of the decalogue: there he beheld the secrets of God and many mysteries of our faith. He learned there in secret what things afterwards he was to teach the people. There, free from all worldly cares, he took leisure and saw how sweet is the Lord: how blessed is the man who reposes on His holy mount. There, suffering no weariness of body, he was refreshed with the bread of life and understanding.

O if thou also couldst go up with Moses into the mountain of virtue, and, now during this holy season, tarry there somewhat with the Lord, to listen to the voice of God speaking from the midst of the cloud and the darkness; perchance to thee also would be given some special grace of divine knowledge and enlightenment of mind, so that thou wouldst think little of bodily food, but wouldst rather taste by experience in thyself, how true is that word of Moses: "Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God."

Moses, after long dwelling with the Lord, is bidden go down for the sake of teaching the people. So every man, who sweetly reposes in God, after tasting this sweetness, must return again usefully and humbly to works of piety. Thus shall he never rest idle but be intent either within on God, or without on the profit of the neighbor.

FRIDAY AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA.

THE *days of penance have come to us, unto the remission of our sins and the salvation of our souls.*

Blessed be God Who has provided us with the season and the method of doing some penance for our sins. Wouldst that now thou wouldst overcome perfectly if only one vice; or unlearn some bad habit. O if thou wouldst now go up but one step in virtue, or wouldst gain some special grace from the Lord. If now thou dost not toil for thy perfection, when, then, wilt thou make progress and when wilt thou correct any failing? At other times it is praiseworthy to be on one's guard against what is lawful: but now it is blamable not to abstain from what is lawful. A holy season demands a holy manner of life; and the many thousand examples of the faithful encourage the more to imitation. It now becomes every Christian to live more holily. Fresh devotion is to be taken up, and greater watchfulness is to be exercised over the senses, and a perfect amendment of the whole man, interior and exterior, is to be pursued. Let the mind be devout, prayer pure, meditation frequent, reading earnest, speech seldom and useful, solitude pleasant and enduring: toil in the hands, piety in the intention, Christ ever in the heart. Our Lord Jesus underwent the grievous torments of the cross, and exhibited to us His patience for our consolation and perpetual imitation. Whoever now is more mortified and more solicitous for his interior progress, assuredly, when the Lord rises, he will more gladly exult with Him.

Give me Thy right hand, good Jesus, so that I may with all fidelity offer Thee the tithe of my days
Amen.

SATURDAY AFTER QUINQUAGESIMA.

JESUS *was led by the Spirit into the desert.* O if for some little time thou wouldst stand with the Lord Jesus, apart from all human fellowship, how happy wouldst thou be! Where thinkest thou was His little hut, or the cave that sheltered Him: or what kind of matting was spread under His body? He sits upon the ground, He sleeps and reposes upon the ground: Who rules heaven and earth. Behold Him now seated, now standing, now bending His knees in prayer to God, His Father Almighty. Accompany Him, therefore, in the grace of devotion, and willingly abide alone with Him in His solitude, having Jesus only for thy comfort. For without Jesus, the whole world is a weariness and a burden. Learn from Him how patient and meek He is in this vast solitude. Ask of Him the reason of this life and say: "What art Thou doing here, Lord Jesus? Why dost Thou flee men, Who canst not come to any harm from men? Why dost Thou shun the crowd, Who canst not be disturbed by any? For what end also dost Thou so severely fast, and thus chastise Thy sacred flesh, seeing there is naught in Thee that needs to be curbed? Or is it for our sakes and for our salvation that Thou dost these things?"

"Truly is it so. I fasted, I hungered, I was tempted and I resisted: I contemned the world and its glory, I overcame the devil and his counsel; that thou also by My example mayest learn to fast, watch, and pray, to despise the world, resist the devil, subdue the flesh, and continue in obedience even unto death. I will gladly accept thy willing offering; and although it be little that thou dost, still a humble and clean oblation is ever pleasing to Me."

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.

THE words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. Listen to the word which proceeds from the mouth of God and from the lips of the blessed Jesus: "Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God." A sublime word, because uttered by the Most High. A great promise, but assured by the supreme Truth. "Blessed are the clean of heart." O sweet saying, which rightly calls the soul to the promise of blessedness. If the promised bliss delights; let cleanness of heart delight also, that thou mayest see the God of gods in Sion. Let thy whole attention be watchful to cleanse the heart, and let thy prayer be frequent and fervent. God is light and He loves the lightsome. God is purity, and He casts away the impure. Instable is the love of the world, and every material joy void of content; but what abides forever, this is the true good of the soul. A very great aid to cleanness of heart are contempt of the world, self-denial for the love of Christ, and frequent meditation on the Incarnate Word. Cleanse therefore the mirror of the heart, if thou desirest to gaze upon God. Very desirable is this purity of heart which makes friends to itself of God and the angels. For this grace we must struggle bravely, pray frequently and toil unweariedly. For every evil thing yields to purity, every created thing is subject to it.

O most beautiful Jesus, Author of all purity, Who hast promised eternal joys to the clean of heart, grant me ever to possess this virtue, so that I may pleasingly serve Thee in the frail flesh, and with all my desires strive to cleave to Thee as long as I live.

MONDAY, THE FIRST WEEK.

HE *that loveth his life shall lose it.* These words speaketh the most loving Jesus, desirous to part thee from the cares and pleasures of the world. Lo, love and loss. The eternal Word of the Father declares it: He does not deceive thee but looks to thy salvation. Self-love is full of fear and anguish: of self-denial is born ineffable freedom. Self-love is an interior malady which is seldom cured, unless God be loved perfectly. Self-contempt is a sign of salvation, and he who commences with self-contempt, will be made perfect in the love of Jesus. Self-love darkens the heart, begets strife, and destroys progress. But he who denies himself for the sake of Jesus, he is free and at peace. The love of Jesus is safe and strong; it knoweth not the soft and self-seekers. The love of Jesus gives all that it is and has, nor seeks save what it knows to be pleasing to God.

The word denial seems hard to the carnal and worldly, but to the lovers of Christ it savors sweeter than honey and the honeycomb; because true self-denial for God's sake makes ready an everlasting kingdom. The love of Jesus can bear present evils: and is strong to break from temporal ease. It fears not to be held in small esteem: and desires not honors. It can hold its peace in face of insults: nor thinks of returning the like to them that injure it. The love of Jesus possesses an invisible consolation: it awaits a fruit that will never wither. The fruit of the flesh is death; from which may He protect us, Who has taught us to despise the world and overcome the flesh: Jesus Christ, our love and our redemption. Amen.

TUESDAY, THE FIRST WEEK.

THE foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests: but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head. This word of Jesus is frequently to be pondered by thee, and carefully set in thy heart. The animals have their dens, and the birds their nests or crevices: but Jesus lived as a poor beggar: He passed the way of the world as a pilgrim in haste. The eternal Wisdom built not Itself a house made of hands in the towns or cities; but content with the common lodging of His friends, He followed the simplicity of the poor in all things. What was given Him for His sustenance, this He placed in the common fund and entrusted to the keeping of another. He desired to have nothing of His own for Himself; and used sparingly those things that natural need required. If perchance aught remained over of gifts or food, this He had distributed to the poor.

Do thou also, therefore, lay aside all useless anxiety for temporal things, nor occupy thyself excessively with resources for the future: but cast thy care upon the Lord and think on heavenly things. Neither toil eagerly for the necessaries of life, that later thou mayest have abundance. Thou canst not alone enrich all posterity, nor guard against all losses. Endeavor rather to leave behind thee an example of virtue, than a sufficiency of worldly income. How knowest thou whether it is expedient for thee and others to have more? Lift up thy heart: cleave not with the brutes to things of earth. Thou art to be fed with the food of angels. The good and loving Master Who has promised things eternal, will not deny the temporal: He will add what is necessary, whilst thou art in this life.

WEDNESDAY, THE FIRST WEEK.

M*Y* meat is to do the will of Him Who sent Me. When the disciples urged Jesus to eat, He showed that the bread of obedience, which most agreeably nourishes the soul subject to God, is to be preferred to all bodily food. There is indeed no drink sweeter than heavenly grace; which cleanses the defiled, waters the parched, and refreshes the tempted. Nor is any more delicious food tasted, or richer banquet placed before the eyes of the loving soul, than the fulfillment of the will of heaven. For to seek the good pleasure of God in what is to be done, is sweet above all else to the lover: and nourishes the obedient disciple well and refreshes him with spiritual joy because of the merit of obedience. Thus Elias penetrating the vast wilderness, and willingly remaining by himself, instructed by the angel arose and ate: and while he fulfilled the command of the angel, he walked in the strength of that food unto the mount of God. For true obedience leads with little toil to the summit of perfection, to the mount of eternal rest: where there is full refreshment from all heat and toil, and possession of entire blessedness in the presence of the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ, with the enjoyment of the Holy Ghost.

O adorable Jesus, Thou Whose example we must ever keep before us, give me grace manfully to bring into subjection to the will of the Father the stubbornness of my spirit; to use prayer more often than before; to be ever watchful therein; to trust lovingly to Thee for help; to leave confidently in Thy hands the issue of all my undertakings; and to be always ready courageously to bear whatever troubles may come upon me. Amen.

THURSDAY, THE FIRST WEEK.

WHEN *you have done all the things that are commanded you, say: "We are unprofitable servants."* The present word of our Lord Jesus Christ instructs us much to the guarding of humility. It especially warns the desirous of high places, to be mindful of their own weakness and negligence; and not to boast of their deeds, although well done according to the judgment of men; but, fearful of the judgment of God above them, rather humbly to implore His mercy than to presume on their own merits. Bring back to memory the evils thou hast perpetrated: the vices of the present, the dangers of the future: and thou shalt not be by any means high-minded, but shalt rather fear and declare thyself base and useless. God has no need of thy service, even if thou dost well; nor wilt thou worthily please Him, unless thou knowest thyself unworthy and unprofitable. When hast thou been able for one day or hour to live so uprightly and guardedly in the sight of God and men, as to overlook nothing of those things that it behooved thee and became thee to do? Put aside therefore all vain complacency and pride. Set thyself manfully against in-rushing vice. And although thou oft be tempted and fall, nevertheless thou shouldst endeavor to rise again, and take up thy good resolve with greater watchfulness. As often as thou fallest short of thy conceived purpose, and hast no strength to march forward; by no means lose heart, or be downcast, but trusting in the Lord, with all humility and great insistence cry and pray: "Help me and I shall be saved: and I will meditate always on Thy justifications."

FRIDAY, THE FIRST WEEK.

THE *children of the Jews, taking olive boughs, went out to meet the Lord.* It gives pleasure to contemplate the devotion of the Jewish people honoring Christ with great joy and praise. For what the Jews bodily offered Christ, living in the flesh, we ought to offer spiritually to the Same, now reigning in heaven: that we might hope to be led back by Christ to everlasting life: Who shall raise our animal body from the dust of the earth, and shall clothe it with the glory of immortality. And to merit this who shall be able to be worthy? assuredly he, who shall humble himself as a little child among the Hebrew children: showing himself ready in every place and time for the good pleasure of God.

This is our King, Whom John the Baptist proclaimed as the Lamb, that was to come into the world: Who for the salvation of the human race drew near to the place of suffering, to accomplish the work of our redemption: as it had been revealed to the holy patriarchs and prophets. He did not turn aside from the face of His enemies: but with the greatest charity and compassion approached to the envious and enraged to calm their passions: moreover, for their coming excesses and evil deeds, He mourned and wept. He heeded not the applause and praise of men: but had His eye open to the future dangers of the perverse: speaking thus to them that securely rejoiced: "For if thou hadst also known what things threaten thee: thou wouldst doubtless rather grieve and weep with Me."

Wherefore cast aside all worldly occupations; gather flowers of good thoughts from Holy Writ: and with interior exercises, as with fresh palms, hasten to meet thy King.

SATURDAY, THE FIRST WEEK.

BEHOLD *thy King cometh to thee.* Let us take further pleasure in examining the apparel and appearance of our humble King, seated upon the colt of an ass: Who when He was in the midst of the rejoicing people, showed no smile but wept. Nowhere in all the pages of the Old Testament do I find any of the kings of Israel, or Jerusalem, riding so humbly: or without warlike arms and sounding trumpets hastening against the enemy. I believe that this was a divine counsel; to fulfill the holy word of the prophet long before foretold: that Christ the King of Israel, was to come in lowly guise and the spirit of meekness. Christ therefore came, the King of kings, the Lord, not in the hand of might to fill men with fear, as worldly princes do: but to give an example of humility, whereby they might easily direct their steps to the heavenly kingdom. Whence also the people, rejoicing greatly in the coming of Christ their King, cried: "A blessing that the kingdom of our father David has come: hosanna in the highest." And they were not scandalized in Him because He came poor; but turned the eyes of their mind to the proofs of His divinity.

O Jerusalem, behold thy King's humility and meekness and justice and poverty, above all the kings of the earth. He took in His riding a poor animal accustomed to the yoke, in token of poverty and innocence. He took, as His company, poor and unarmed men; to whom He promised to give the kingdom of God, which no man shall be able to take from them by force. Whereto by His grace may He deign to bring us, Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world, the King of glory: Who is above all God blessed for ever. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.

THE *Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.* Above all the benefits of God bestowed on the human race, the Passion of Christ stands supreme and touches the heart most tenderly. Therefore ought the mind to be watchful to remember so great a benefit, and with great compassion of heart, earnestly ponder on the bitterness of Christ's Passion: for this is grateful to God and wholesome for him that meditates.

Ponder, therefore, Who is He that suffers these things. Verily He is the Son of God Who suffers the Only-begotten of God the Father, the First-born of the Virgin Mother, conceived of the Holy Ghost, full of holiness and grace. Behold the highest above all is put down lower than all; the noblest is dishonored, the loveliest is disfigured with spittle; the wisest is mocked, the mightiest is bound; the most innocent is scourged, the holiest is crowned with thorns; the most meek is buffeted, the richest is made poor; the most generous is despoiled, the most chaste is stripped naked; the most worthy is blasphemed, the most excellent is reproached; the most learned is held a fool, the most loving is hated; the most truthful is contradicted, to the most sweet is given drink of gall; the blessed is cursed, the peaceful is baited; the just is accused, the guiltless is condemned; the physician is wounded, the Son of God is crucified. Whence for a time the light of the world is quenched, thence light eternal is relit in the minds of the faithful. Whence for a brief season life is dead, thence everlasting death is slain in the elect. By the Passion of Christ the gates of heaven are opened, eternal salvation is proclaimed to the whole world.

MONDAY, THE SECOND WEEK.

O MY *people, what more ought I to do for thee, and have not done it?* Consider from whom Christ suffers these wrongs. Assuredly from His own people, from His own race dear to Him; from His kindred according to the flesh; from the Israelites, children of Abraham, whom of old He enriched with so many blessings, ennobled with so many privileges, instructed beyond the other nations with precepts and laws and ceremonies; from men whom He Himself founded, to whom He gave the best portion of the earth; for whose sake He came into this world and whom He desired to save. They heeded not how humbly He lived among them, how wholesomely He taught them; how He loved poverty and despised wealth; how he fled honors and chose the lowly and simple; how many sick He healed, to how many blind He gave sight, how many demons He expelled, how many lepers He cleansed; and how resplendent with many other glorious signs, by His works He proved Himself God, and undergoing the needs of our body, showed Himself to be a true man. For these many good things they returned many evil; old men with youths clamored, with awful cries: "Away with Him, away with Him, let Him be crucified."

O wondrous clemency of God! O inestimable patience of Christ! which could not be moved by such wrongs, nor exhausted by sufferings. For herein He gave to all that suffer wrongs a most excellent and strong encouragement, that they bear at least a few passing words who cannot yet endure hard blows.

TUESDAY, THE SECOND WEEK.

THEY *have pierced My hands and My feet; they have numbered all My bones.* Thou shouldst meditate how much Christ suffers and how many numerous evils are inflicted upon Him. First He was sold for a little money by His own disciple; afterwards, by a kiss of feigned peace betrayed to the enemy; grievously reproached by the priests; called a blasphemer by the pontiff; defamed by the Scribes and Pharisees; accused by the elders of the city; brought before the judge by the servants; by Herod despised and mocked; by Pilate condemned to death; taken and bound by armed men; scourged and crowned by the soldiers; insulted, spat upon and cuffed by the retainers; detested by the maid servants. Jesus was forsaken; He was hounded to death; with shame and shouting He was led outside the city, laden with the wood of the cross; stripped of His garments, hanged naked between thieves; fastened with nails, given to drink of vinegar and gall. Grievous were the wicked words; more grievous the cruel blows; most grievous the dreadful sufferings of the cross. From the sole of His foot to the crown of His head there was no soundness of body, but He seemed as a leper to all that beheld. See then now and ponder whether there is a sorrow like to His sorrow which Thy God endures for thee. In thy every trouble turn the eye of thy mind to Jesus hanging on the cross; and "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, Who debased Himself, taking the form of a servant, becoming obedient even to the death of the cross."

WEDNESDAY, THE SECOND WEEK.

CHRI**S**T *died once for our sins, the just for the unjust; that He might offer us to God.* Weigh well for whom Christ suffered and for what reason God endured so bitter a death. Without doubt it was for our sins, which we contracted from our first parents, which also we have each committed by our own wickedness, in every age, or condition, or order, or office whatsoever. "For all have sinned and do need the glory of God," saith the Apostle. Sons of Adam, we are all born children of wrath by nature, but by the grace of Christ we are delivered, by the baptism of Christ cleansed, by the death of Christ saved from death everlasting. For the Head suffered for the members, the Head ached for the members, the Head on the cross prayed for the members and gained forgiveness. Therefore for all Christ died; so that, undergoing temporal death, He might overcome eternal death, and of sin destroy sin: that is that by the sufferings of His Passion He might pay all debts of our sins.

The Passion of Christ is the treasure of the Church, which cannot be exhausted or consumed, but is of infinite power and worth. For hereby every debt is paid, every sin is forgiven; and to the penitent the kingdom of heaven is promised and given. Christ found no man free from sin, therefore He came to deliver all; by love He satisfied for all; by His compassion He willed; by His divinity He was able; by His humanity He accomplished the work of redemption. Whence blessed Paul said, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself; for Christ we beseech you, be reconciled to God."

THURSDAY, THE SECOND WEEK.

YE *are bought with a great price.* Ponder how long a time Christ suffered, and how long He was in pain; for this is a part of the endurance of His patience and brings great encouragement to the cowardly and sad. The whole life of Christ, from the beginning of His birth to the giving up of the ghost, was spent in great poverty, in persecution and temptation, in toil and weariness, in the contempt and insults of wicked men, and, finally, consummated in the death of the cross. But considering the particular day and hour of His Passion, then from the evening of the most holy supper, the sadness and coming death commenced; when, while His disciples still supped, He foretold them that the same night He should be betrayed by one of them into the hands of sinners; and it continued until after the hour of His burial, yea even to the third day on which He rose from the dead. Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, suffered for us all the most grievous torments, a long time and at different hours; for a whole night and day He bore suffering for the sins of men, very often shedding His precious blood. Our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, willed to endure in His most holy body so long a time so many pains to take away the handwriting of our condemnation; to arouse us to the fervor of severe penance; to give us an example of great patience all the days of our life.

Study, therefore, after the example of Christ to bear with an even mind all the adversities of this life, and to hold on to patience as thy armor. Complain not of the length of time, nor of the bitterness of the affliction. Christ suffered longer more grievous things for thee: it is just thou shouldst follow the same way.

FRIDAY, THE SECOND WEEK.

JESUS *also, that He might sanctify the people by His own blood, suffered without the gate.* Note all those places in which Christ suffered any insults or pains for thee. On Mount Olivet He prayed thrice; there for sadness and fear He sweated blood and in the prayer He made, He perfectly resigned Himself to the will of His Father. In the garden He was sought and found by the Jews: He did not flee from them, but went to meet them; by Judas He was betrayed, and kissed; by the armed servants taken and bound; by the vile band, as a wicked thief, He was violently dragged and brought to the city. In the house of Annas He is first examined, and He is questioned concerning His teaching and His disciples, and when He had given a good answer, He was severely buffeted on the cheek. In the house of Caiphas, the high priest, He is subjected to numerous wrongs and mockeries; His face is veiled, defiled with spittle, struck with blows, and He is declared worthy of death. He is publicly led with hands bound, through the streets to the judgment hall of Pilate; and grievously charged as a breaker of the law and a seducer of the people. Thence He is sent to the court of Herod: by whom derided, He is treated as a fool, and sent back to Pilate. Mocked on all sides, reproached on all sides; nowhere safe, nowhere at rest, after receiving cruel blows and many wounds, He is led out of the city with the shameful cross; and hanged naked between thieves on the place of Calvary.

Take as thine help the Passion of Christ; have recourse to humility and the remedy of confession; seek the mercy of God and place thine whole hope of salvation in Christ.

SATURDAY, THE SECOND WEEK.

WITH *these I was wounded in the house of them that loved Me.* Take heed, and with immense grief consider, in what members Christ suffered and what pains He endured for us in every joint and in the five senses of the body. O what cruel blows He bore in the scourging: how many thousands of wounds were inflicted on Him; how often He was struck again in the same place. Willingly and freely He gave up His whole body to the strikers that He might fully satisfy for the sins of all men. Turn the eye of the heart to the different limbs pierced with wounds. Begin from the sole of the foot and go up to the crown of the head: for the whole body of Jesus is full of the most bitter torment. Christ suffered and was wounded in His beautiful and innocent feet, wherewith He walked, often wearied, through the land preaching the word of God. Christ also suffered and was grievously wounded in His holy hands, whereby He often gave blessing, touched the sick and made them whole, with which He took bread and ate, consecrated His body and gave to His disciples for their comfort. Christ also suffered very painfully in His most holy head, as in the chief member of His body, for all the lower members, which we are who believe in Him, and cleave to Him by faith and love.

Therefore, if thou art a member of Christ, and livest and savorest of the spirit of Christ, give heed now to the head of Christ, the Son of the living God, and see with what sharp thorns it is pierced all round for thy sins. See the Lord Jesus suffering for thee, wounded and dead for thee, and have for all His sorrows at least a sigh, if thou canst not shed a tear.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.

M*Y soul is sorrowful even unto death.* Bless and give thanks to thy Lord Jesus Christ for the sad beginning of His most bitter Passion; for the exceeding distress of His soul; for the anxiety and dread, which, in the weakness of His human nature, taken upon Him of His own free will for our sakes, He did feel, as the hour of His betrayal drew nigh, and He began to be fearful and very sad. Nor did He think it shame to confess this sadness to His disciples. O wondrous dispensation of God! The Lord of all power, Who but a short while since gave strength to His disciples for the strife, now bears Himself as One Who is weak, and wanting in courage.

And this He did the more perfectly to comfort us in weakness and faintheartedness, lest perchance some one of us, when sorely tempted, should despair of pardon or salvation; for if such a one should feel himself less cheerful than he should be under suffering, less brave than he should be in enduring trials of the flesh, he may still be able to say with His Lord: "Father, not My will, but Thine, be done."

O most loving Jesus, my only hope in every trouble and distress, make me, I pray Thee, to ponder, with a heart full of compassion, the sorrowful beginning of this Thy blessed Passion, and from this sad prelude to go on by degrees to meditate upon the still more bitter parts of it, that so I may be able from each several part to gather for the wounds of my soul some healing medicine. Grant that I may bear with patient courage, for the glory of Thy name, whatever troubles may be awaiting me, and may in all things resign myself to the good pleasure of Thy divine Providence.

MONDAY, THE THIRD WEEK.

HE shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before His shearer, and He shall not open His mouth. He was offered because it was His own will. Behold the Lord Jesus violently seized by His hateful enemies, and, with wild tumult, hurried away to His death by vile and worthless scoundrels; while the disciples, who were so dear to Him, either fled, or with eyes full of grief and sorrow looked upon Him from afar.

Compassionate, O my soul, thy most loving Lord God, an ill-used prisoner, enduring of His own free will all these things because of thy sins. Groan deeply, and let thine eyes be wet with tears of sorrow, at the thought of the Only-begotten Son of God being treated with such indignity for thy sake. See what the wicked Jews are doing. They hold Jesus captive, they lead Him bound before Annas, and before Caiphas the high priest: but when He is seized He does not resist; when He is bound He does not complain; when He is led away He does not struggle with His captors; when He is being dragged along He utters no ill-word; but He goes meekly on, is quiet as a lamb, follows His captors as One Who is guiltless, bears everything as One Who is humility itself.

I pray Thee, O my God, that the thought of the grievous restraint thus put upon Thee may sink deep in my heart. May Thy painful bonds win for me true liberty, and by strong discipline keep me ever in Thy service. May I have grace to bring my own inner life, at least in some small measure, into conformity with the example which Thou didst set when Thou wast bound, and held captive.

TUESDAY, THE THIRD WEEK.

I HAVE *trodden the wine-press alone*. The good Shepherd and gracious Master, our Lord Jesus Christ, was most sadly abandoned and utterly lonely in the extremity of His need. For His brethren, and His familiar friends—who had promised to die, and to give their lives, for Him—when the need came, one and all forsook Him and fled. The Lord, to Whom all things are known, and Who does not allow anything to happen without its fulfilling some purpose of His own, permitted these chosen vessels of His to show such great weakness in order that out of it greater good might come. From this fall, in short, it was that they were led to know their own frailty, and to sympathize with that of other weaker brethren; and so ever afterwards they remained more distrustful of themselves, more fervent in spirit, more humble and devout.

How useful it is for me to meditate diligently on this subject, and never to think too highly of myself. If the pillars of heaven, the Apostles of Christ, gave way in time of tribulation, what is a most frail and unprofitable weakling likely to do when even slight temptation assails him?

O Lord, grant that I may keep in mind Thy grievous desertion and rejection, and count it gain to be deprived of human consolation, if only I may thereby, in my small degree, be conformed to what Thou hadst to undergo. Thou hast trodden the narrow way before me, and, alas! I pass by without a tear, as if Thy anguish were no concern of mine. Take pity, I pray Thee, upon my cold, dull heart, and fill it with a loving remembrance of Thy most bitter Passion.

WEDNESDAY, THE THIRD WEEK.

I *F I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou Me?* Our glorious King, Jesus Christ, was first arraigned before Annas, the priest, where He was questioned about many things, and in return for His meek and truthful answer, was rudely smitten on the cheek. O most vile and impious servant, how was it that thou didst not fear to strike the face of thy Creator, deserving of all love, with thy guilty hands! How unspeakable was the virtue of meekness which shone forth in our adorable Jesus, when, instead of avenging so insulting a blow with immediate chastisement, He calmly expostulated with him who struck Him.

Bethink thee now, O Christian, and say whether for love of Jesus, thou couldst endure a slap in the face. Thou who canst not bear a hard word without losing thy temper, how couldst thou bear to be smitten on the mouth? Thou dost grieve over the uncalled-for violence offered to thy Lord; but much more sad, surely, is it that thou shouldst be so little able to endure, for Christ's sake, even trivial wrongs. Thou makest grand resolutions, thy ideals are lofty; but the first reproachful word upsets thee, and thou findest thyself weaker than thou hadst thought thyself to be. Flee then to Jesus, and pray Him to give thee the virtue of patience.

O good Jesus, Thou strength and stay of the troubled soul, teach me to bear, with an even mind, blame and reproach; teach me, when complaints are unjustly made against me, not angrily to fight against them, but rather to get the better of them by meekly holding my peace. Give me, O most gentle Jesus, for my impregnable shield, modest and imperturbable calmness of mind.

THURSDAY, THE THIRD WEEK.

I **ADJURE** *Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us if Thou be the Christ the Son of God. Jesus saith to him: Thou hast said it.* Jesus Christ, Chief Priest, and Perpetual High Priest, was contemptuously led away from the house of Annas to that of Caiphaz the high priest, where the Scribes and Elders were gathered together to take cruel counsel against Him. This is their hour, and that of the power of darkness, permitted by God, to His honor and glory indeed, and for the salvation of the faithful, but for the eternal damnation of unbelievers. Grievous charges were, by the falsest of witnesses, laid against Him; the high priest asked Him many questions, adjuring Him to answer truthfully; and at last, on a charge of blasphemy, He was by them all, with loud voice, declared to be guilty of death.

Ponder, then, O loving follower of Christ, and lay seriously to heart, how great was the splendor of the lowly patience of Jesus under suffering! See what shameful reproaches He has to bear, Whose praises are sung by the heavenly hosts! For His truthful answer to the high priest's question He is condemned as a blasphemer; but He bears all in silence; and the more He allows Himself to be trodden under foot of the ungodly, the greater is His victory, the greater is His triumph over them.

Cease, therefore, O faithful soul, from thy passionate murmurings at reproaches cast upon thee. Bow down thy back to sustain the burden of earthly trials. Blush at thy honors, thy fine surroundings, and thy fine clothing; seeing that for thee Christ was content to be absolutely poor.

FRIDAY, THE THIRD WEEK.

LET *us always bear about in our body the mortification of Jesus: that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies.* Thou, God, the Creator of all, didst deign to become man and to die for men. I therefore suppliantly pray Thee, Lord, mercifully to look upon me, a sinner, and by Thy grace inwardly to enlighten, frequently to visit, to water with tears, to crush and cleanse with compunction; so that whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy precious blood, Thou mayest renew and enkindle by the earnest meditation of Thy Passion. Grant me devoutly to progress therein and ever to gather thence wholesome remedies for all my passions. Would that it more and more deeply touched my heart than it has hitherto; and affected and instructed me in such manner as it has often enkindled and touched many holy men and women. So that in my life also the likeness of Thy death might result by the working of the spirit and the mortification of the flesh, and I might be able to say that memorable word of the Apostle: "With Christ I am nailed to the cross." Whatever he felt grievous in the body, or troublesome in the soul, all this he deemed light and easily bearable from the loving contemplation of Thy wounds. And therefore he exhorted all Thy faithful lovers saying: "Let us always bear about in our body the mortification of Jesus: that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies." Strive thou also, my soul, now to do this same, and with mournful mind and devout attention, direct thither thy gaze where thou knowest Jesus suffered for thee in more grievous pains.

SATURDAY, THE THIRD WEEK.

BUT *us it behooves to glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ: in Whom is our salvation, life, and resurrection.* These words concerning the sacred cross are read and chanted in Holy Church; and therein is praised the merit of our Lord's Passion which is most deservedly placed before all the sacrifices of the Law, for in the Passion and cross of Christ is our true salvation and redemption.

Happy the soul whose heart is pierced by the most bitter Passion of Christ, and who daily exercises herself therein, meditating, reading, praying. Blessed the soul which takes up her cross, renouncing all earthly things, and whatsoever trouble befalls her within or without, bears it all patiently for Christ and holds her peace. For this is to glory in the cross, to rejoice in tribulation for Christ's sake, to abstain from delights of the flesh, to flee honors, to forsake one's own will, and humbly to obey even unto death. To do this is to imitate Christ by the cross and truly to love Him. For herein Christ knows who belongs to Him, and who loves Him more: if a man strive to conform himself to His Passion not only in thought but in daily mortification. And for this who is fit? Thinkest thou any man will be found ready to take up his cross? A great and deep mystery is the word of the cross which all do not receive. Yea, very many dread and flee the cross and yet it leads to life eternal.

O most beloved cross, chosen by Christ and on His shoulders borne to the place of Calvary, help me and defend me, that I may continue in a right faith, firm hope, and perfect charity for His sake, Who died on thee for me.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT.

THANKS *be to God Who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Truly the Passion of Christ is the hidden treasure of God, the fullness of every virtue, the summary of all holiness.

But, alas, how great is the ingratitude of man, how great is the sloth of the human heart, how great its carelessness in remembering the benefits of God, which are so boundless and precious that they cannot be computed nor fully unfolded by any man. For this thou shouldst grieve much that never hast thou offered worthy thanks to God for His so immense blessings. Thou shouldst strive to raise thy heart to God, and as much as thou canst, ponder God's gifts with great attention, and serve Him with sovereign reverence in joy of heart.

A great vice is ingratitude, and exceedingly blamable before God and man. For he is unworthy of a divine favor who does not give thanks to God with a devout heart. Nor does he deserve to receive more who praises himself in anything, or works carelessly, were it only one talent granted him. Nor should anything be deemed little, which the Lord, so great and high above all, bestows on a man poor and a sinner. Let God then be loved much, let His praise be ever in thy mouth. Let all be rendered back to Him, let all be attributed to Him, Who certainly has given all and has favored one unworthy. Nor does God seek aught, save to be purely loved and duly praised for all; so that by loving, praising, honoring, and returning thanks to Him above all, man may be forever beatified in Him. Amen.

MONDAY, THE FOURTH WEEK.

THINK *diligently upon the Lord Jesus Christ, that endured such opposition from sinners against Himself, that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds.* The Passion of Christ, brought back to memory, bestows many benefits on man; and the more often and earnestly it is pondered, the more sweetly it savors and the more deeply it moves. For it is an incentive to divine love; it is the teaching of patience; it is comfort in tribulation. It is the foe of dissipation; it is the subject of holy compunction; it is the exercise of interior devotion. It is the banishing of despair; it is the most certain pardon of sins; it is the profitable redemption of past evil days. It is a source of surpassing confidence in the hour of death, that a man despair not of himself; it is the appeasing of the severity of God in the judgment to come. It is the soothing of anxious trouble; it is the endurance of harsh reproach. It is the expulsion of evil thought; it is the restraint of temptation of the flesh. It is instruction in humble submission; it is ease in bodily sickness. It is the belying of worldly honor; it is the reproach of temporal abundance. It is the counsel of voluntary poverty; it is the renunciation of self-will; it is the cutting off of superfluous wants. It is the arousing of lukewarm life; it is the inflaming of fervent amendment. It is the gaining of fuller grace; it is the bringing of heavenly consolation. It is the easing of present pain; it is the purging of future fire; it is great satisfaction for daily sins. With these and very many other goods abounds the Passion of Christ devoutly pondered, often read, carefully digested.

TUESDAY, THE FOURTH WEEK.

I GAVE *My back to the smiters.* The Lord Jesus Christ, by the cruel order of the wicked Governor, was ordered to be stripped of His clothing, and to be hung upon the cross quite naked, to be bound with hard cords, to be beaten with sharp cutting rods, and to be scourged as if He had been a wicked seducer of the people, and the vilest of malefactors. Sharply cutting wounds were inflicted on His most sacred and tender body by those fierce soldiers who mercilessly struck His virgin flesh, and rent it deeply, adding blow to blow, bruise upon bruise, that so there might remain no sound part in Him, and that at each stroke numberless streams of His precious blood might gush forth like those of a crimson river—all which He did endure that He might purge us from the deep-rooted pollutions of our sins, and might cleanse our souls from every guilty stain by His most precious blood.

Keep therefore ever in remembrance, O faithful soul redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, the scourging of thy Lord; and, suffering so far as thou mayest with Him, give to Him in return the obedience of a heart filled with a lively sense of gratitude. If thou hast anything hard, anything contrary to the flesh, to endure, if only thou wilt meditate on the scourging of Jesus, it will be to thee light and easy to be borne.

O altogether sweet Jesus, Who for me, the chief of sinners, wast most cruelly scourged, grant, I pray Thee, to my weakness the help of Thy grace; that remembering Thy undeserved scourging, I may be found meek and submissive under what I have to bear, no matter how heavy it may be.

WEDNESDAY, THE FOURTH WEEK.

BEHOLD *the Man*. See, from the judgment hall, goes forth the most meek and patient Jesus, wearing on His head the crown of thorns, and clothed in a purple robe, that so perchance the rage of the fickle mob might be ever so little changed into compassion, at seeing their victim so dishonored and ill treated! But the angry crowd rages only the more fiercely; and as Pilate calls out: "Behold the Man," it shrieks back its answer: "Away with Him! Away with Him!"

When thou hast heard all this, O faithful lover of Jesus, and laid it to heart, tremble, and grow pale at the thought of the extremity of His affliction. Beat thy breast, pour forth thy tears, and fall low upon thy knees, at the sight of Jesus crowned and made believe to be a King. As member of a Body, the Head of which is crowned with thorns, be not, for very shame, fond of pleasure: having before thee thy Lord, in all His majesty, submitting to this hardship and disgrace, shrink thou from choosing a life of great softness. Stand in awe, ye proud ones, who pant to rise higher in the world. Blush with shame, ye exquisites, who dare to carry yourselves proudly in the presence of Jesus scourged and crowned. Be comforted, poor Lazarus full of sores, and thou, whoever thou art, who in this world art of no account.

My loving Jesus, may the thought of Thy sufferings crush within me all my evil affections; and may the remembrance of Thy most cruel anguish make my daily worries easier for me to bear. May the holy vision of Thy crowning, borne in upon my mind, and carefully and deeply meditated, bring me great comfort under the assaults of the enemy.

THURSDAY, THE FOURTH WEEK.

AWAY *with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him!*
Crucify Him! Alas, how great was the savagery of those miserable Jews; how inhuman was the cruelty of the priests and of the Pharisees, who felt no fear at putting Jesus to death, who felt no compunction at shedding innocent blood! The heathen judge is moved to some sort of pity; but the hearts of the Jews are hardened to yet more cruel malice. Pilate would discharge Him, he seeks to release Him, he declares that he finds no cause of death in Him; but the Jews, forgetting all the good works He had wrought among them, will not listen, crying out again: "If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend: for whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar." Alas, with what utter falseness do they allege these things against Him, Who never, either by word or deed, sought earthly honors.

O thou to whom the Passion of thy Lord is dear, lay seriously to heart the thought of this hour, shut close the ears of thy heart against profitless chatter about the things of this world, and throw them wide open to hear this miserable outcry for the crucifixion of Jesus. Should even thy good actions be distorted, and many set themselves up against thee, cavilling at thy words, bear all this meekly; for thou art not more innocent than Christ. Let not evil words, which are things of a moment, get the better of thee, for whom is laid up by God an eternal weight of glory.

Gracious Lord Jesus, hold above me Thy life-giving cross; that so I may render to Thee with faithful lips the sacrifice of thanks and praise for victory won under its shadow.

FRIDAY, THE FOURTH WEEK.

BEHOLD *the Just perisheth and no man layeth it to heart.* Alas, alas, He Who is Truth is delivered over to men who are false, the holy One is scourged by sinners; He Who is guiltless is condemned instead of him who is guilty: a robber is chosen instead of Christ, and Barabbas, who had been cast into prison, is set free instead of Jesus of Nazareth! The lamb takes the place of the wolf; the holy One that of the malefactor; the best of men that of the worst; the man whose life was forfeit escapes, instead of Him Who is very God. Darkness is more highly esteemed than light, vice than virtue, death than life, one who is infamous than One Who is most noble.

Which of us on hearing these things can withhold a sigh? Which of us can help burning with anger against the Jews? Which of us can help blaming the judge? The judge may wash his hands, he may excuse himself before men; we may grant that he acted in fear of Cæsar, and that he was overborne by the uproar of the Jews; yet is he not wholly free from guilt; for he knew that they had delivered Him up out of envy. Better surely would it have been to have sacrificed place, and the honors of this world, than to have condemned One Who was innocent, and Whom Pilate knew to be such. More profitable had it been to have lost the whole world, than to have put Christ to death!

O most sweet and loving Lord, Who wast unjustly condemned by Pilate the governor, and sentenced to the shameful death of the cross, help me willingly to bear the yoke of subjection, and the rod of correction, and in every trouble that comes upon me to call to mind Thy anguish.

SATURDAY, THE FOURTH WEEK.

DAUGHTERS of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry? See Jesus with His body bent almost double from the weight of that burden, so far beyond His strength, which He was compelled to bear to the hill of Calvary.

O how bitter at that time was the lamentation of the holy women, who looked at Him with eyes full of compassion, but were unable to come near to Him, or to save Him from going to death. And how inconceivably great must have been the woe which filled and racked the Mother's heart of Mary the Virgin, as she saw her only, her most dearly loved Son, bearing the wood of the cross and going forth to die! O how gladly would she have offered herself to die instead of Him, had she thought that this would have been pleasing to her Son. But that which was actually not possible, nor permitted, that mentally she did indeed bear to the full.

The inward burden of Christ's anguish was thus in many ways increased; for beside it, He had to bear also the things that came upon Him from without, His being forsaken by His disciples, His Mother's grief, the stumbling-block which His tribulation was to many, and the faintheartedness of those who despaired of His resurrection: for, except that of the glorious Virgin, the faith of all was wavering, or seemed to be extinct.

O faithful disciple of Christ, make thou also haste to share the burden of the mystic cross; and, if thou wouldst attain to joys eternal, strive now to follow thy Redeemer's steps.

PASSION SUNDAY.

O ALL ye that pass by the way: attend and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow. Now the memory of our Lord's Passion is celebrated in Holy Church: and it is befitting that the children of the Church compassionate their Lord, Who for them deigned to die in the body that they might live both in body and soul for all eternity.

But what shalt thou do; and what shalt thou render to the Lord for His death? It behooves thee to do something, although thou canst not repay Him a worthy recompense for His death which He willingly underwent for thee. Recall to mind then His holy Passion, and according to thy measure strive to imitate it; for this is to render Him great thanks: cheerfully to desire to suffer tribulations for Him. Draw then thy mind away from outward things, and turn thy whole thought to the image of thy crucified Lord. For thou wilt be able, by the impression of this holy image, the more patiently to endure all bodily pains. Now let fresh devotion inflame thee, because of the Passion of Christ. If thou rememberest that thou hast done anything well, add still better to what is passed. Be now more earnest and fervent, for so the memory of our Lord's Passion demands. Let it not be burdensome or wearisome to think over the bitter Passion of Christ, which He was ready to endure for thee. Each of these days gather and carry away a bunch of myrrh from the vine of the Lord of Sabaoth, which place between thy breasts for the custody of thy heart: for thence breathes the odor of life; and if thou chew it well, thou shalt receive wondrous strength amidst trials and reproaches.

MONDAY, PASSION WEEK

BLESSED *are the eyes that see the things which you see.* Above all precious perfumes, the Passion of my Lord Jesus Christ diffuses its sweet odor: containing in brief summary the treasure-store of all graces. Therefore it gives chiefest delight to behold Jesus hanging on the cross, and showing me the most holy wounds of His body: lived indeed with pain, but bright with love, beyond all His actions inducing compunction: so that save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, nothing pleases my mind to think, to read, or speak, or hear. May God do this to me and add this, Who refuses not His mercy to sinners, and is lovingly nigh and favorable to the affections of the devout: that the most sacred Passion of my Lord Jesus Christ never fade from my memory: but the grief and love of the most loving Crucified pierce and wound my heart, and most mightily unite and inflame: so that the whole world grow vile to me, and Jesus crucified alone above all give relish; and the more intimately and most frequently lead me unto the inner mysteries of His Passion.

In many ways, according to the desire of the loving soul the dear Jesus can wondrously reveal Himself, and more fully instruct concerning His most holy life and precious death and the glory of His resurrection; so that what the sacred Gospels teach and unfold in words outwardly, Jesus coming in the spirit, Himself wisely and spiritually explains within, without noise of words: according to His blessed promise: "I am the Door; by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved: and he shall go in and shall go out, and shall find pastures." Amen.

TUESDAY, PASSION WEEK.

I TO *my Beloved: and His turning is towards me.*
Between friends mutual discourse gives delight, and private counsel is held dear. Such also often takes place between the devout soul and Jesus crucified. She therefore says: "I to my Beloved am what I am, and beside Him I heed no other. On Him alone I long to gaze, to Him wholly I commend myself for He has care of me. His turning is towards me in a special manner when He arouses me with the interior goads of love to renew the memory of His Passion, and demands that I thank Him and be conformed to Him within. For this wisdom, which comes from above, is beyond man, teaching and urging not to glory save in the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ, in Whom is my whole salvation and redemption. By Whom also the world is crucified to me and I to the world, that I may delight to say to Him with confidence: I to my Beloved and His turning is towards me. Much sweetness seems to me to be hidden in this word and if I do not take all, still I do not give up hope of receiving some, if only a very little. Let the Beloved be turned towards me and say what He pleases, I know that He will not speak in vain."

"My Passion," saith the Beloved, "is as some aromatic herb of most excellent perfume and sweetest taste which carefully pondered in the heart, as if crushed in a mortar, diffuses a most powerful odor, healing every disease and sickness of vice. Take up, then, a little portion of My Passion, and diligently think it over according to the time and season. Bring hither thy hand and see the place of My nails and be not cowardly and fearful, but strong and great-souled in imitation of My sufferings."

WEDNESDAY, PASSION WEEK.

FOR *i judged not myself to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ and Him crucified.* Take heed to this, my soul, and leaving aside curious things and all vanities, direct the interior eye of the heart to Jesus crucified. For the present watch diligently, and with Jesus on Mount Olivet pray to the Father, that as to Him was given the chalice of His blessed Passion to drink, so to thee also be granted an ardent affection to compassionate Him lovingly. For thou shalt find more in the wounds of Jesus Christ than in the possession of the whole world. And the Passion of Christ alone will bring thee greater wonder of mind than the contemplation of all created things.

Alas, alas, O Lord, how many pass before Thee heedlessly; with dry eyes and unmoved heart they pass by Thy image; without reverence or genuflection they hurry through the churches: they haste rather to go out than to come in; it gives them more pleasure to chatter than to pray; scarcely can they bide a short while in Thy praise, although Thou didst hang upon the cross, filled with many sorrows and reproaches, a long space of hours for their salvation. They are soon moved by a slight insult, and are nowise touched by the insults of their Lord Jesus Christ; they feel a small hurt of their body and ponder not the most terrible pains of their Lord. How little a love! since the Head is grievously wounded and the heart feels no grief thereat. Where are our eyes, O Lord; and whither have we sent away our ears, that we give no heed to Thee? Convert us to Thee, for very soon are we turned away from Thee. Speedily we forget Thy great love which Thou hast shewn us in Thy blessed Passion.

THURSDAY, PASSION WEEK.

AND *they took Jesus and led Him forth: and bearing His own cross, He went forth to that place which is called Calvary.* The meek Lord proceeds on the way of shame with wondrous gentleness; willingly He passes out through the gate of Jerusalem, over which He wept on the day of palms. He bears with patience the derision of His hanging, inflicted on Him by His own nation. He protests not at the injuries done Him: He resists not, goaded on violently from behind. He summons not the angels to His aid, nor begs the assistance of His friends, but He goes on without delay. Alone He bears His most heavy burden: alone He suffers the reproach of shame. He is not withdrawn from the way of the cross by affection for His Mother, nor hindered by the tears of His friends. He is not disturbed by the clamors of them that accompany Him, nor moved by the shouts of them that hate Him. He is not retarded by weariness of body from the task He has begun, nor overwhelmed by the storm of scandals. Alone, and that most constantly, He perseveres: free and with peaceful heart He stretches forward to the agony of His punishment, persisting ever in the praise of His Father, shutting out no man from His love; but with eager desire longing to fulfill the precept of the Father, ordained from eternity, and to consummate the work of man's reparation laid upon Him by His Passion and cross.

"Who wishes to come after Me," He said, "let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." Lo, thou hast thy Guide on the rough way, Jesus the Son of God, the Captain and Teacher to the nations!

FRIDAY, PASSION WEEK.

WHERE *they crucified Him, and with Him two others, one on each side, and Jesus in the midst.*

Coming therefore to the place of Calvary, with the standard of the cross, Jesus chose there to set up the title of His name, and to work the mystery of our salvation. There then Jesus, the Standard-bearer of the cross, Prince and Patron of all cross-bearers, stood in the place of awful shame. There He is speedily stripped of His garments; and naked He ascended the naked cross, and prayed for them that crucified Him. There the Almighty, as though He had no power, allowed Himself to be stretched out into the form of a cross, to be fastened by nails, to be pierced by a lance, and to be derided by wicked men. There deprived of all human comfort, He left an example of perfect self-denial and a pattern of utter poverty. There by the touch of His sacred flesh, He consecrated the wood of life, and by the shedding of His precious blood, dedicated the altar of the cross. There He ended His life by a happy agony through obedience on the cross: dying, He conquered death, opened the gate of Paradise, and led the late repenting thief with Him to the promised joys.

Since, therefore, Jesus carried His cross on His own shoulders, Who was without sin, bear thou also thy cross, for thou hast grievously and often sinned and justly deserved eternal punishment. Strive to keep the way of the holy cross and to carry the sorrowful image of the crucified Jesus in thy heart, and manfully to imitate Him in thy frail body according to thy strength. Freely resign thyself, and trustfully commend all thy affairs to the will of God.

SATURDAY, PASSION WEEK.

THEY *looked upon Him Whom they had pierced.*
Lift up thine eyes O faithful servant of Jesus
and with sad heart, and mournful countenance,
look upon thy Redeemer and thy God, hanging be-
tween the lofty arms of the cross. Thy loved one
hangs there naked, that thou mayest look on Him;
His feet cannot move, but He waits for thee to come
to Him, He longs for thee freely to draw near to
Him. He lovingly opens wide His arms, He shows
thee His gaping wounds, He bends forward His head.
He is ready to receive thee into His favor, and
without delay to forgive thee all thy sins. Draw
near, then, boldly to the cross, touch it lovingly,
embrace it fervently, hold it firmly, kiss it devoutly.
Throw thyself at its feet, go not from the cross; that
so thou mayest win to hear some word spoken by the
Crucified, or when the end comes, to stand by His
side. Pay to Him the duty, which thou owest Him,
of thy tears; enter into the secret chamber of thy
heart; let the Crucified find in thee a loving and a
sorrowing disciple, one who is thankful and devout, a
cherisher of the inner life, and one who is drawn by
the cords of love to His wounds; that so the whole
world may be crucified to thee, and thou to the world;
that so to thee to live may be Christ, and to die with
Him thy greatest gain. Be it far from thee to glory,
save in the cross of Jesus Christ, thy Lord. Be it far
from thee to trust in thy own merits; upon the
cross of Jesus alone depend thy salvation and thy
redemption, and on Him thou art most firmly bound to
place thy only hope.

Look, O heavenly Father, upon the face of Thy
Christ. Him I offer to Thee as my Surety; to Him
I leave the defense of my cause.

PALM SUNDAY.

FATHER, *forgive them for they know not what they do.* With hands outstretched upon the cross Jesus plead in behalf of His enemies and of those who were crucifying Him, imploring pardon for them and making loving excuses for them, in words so full of sweetness and of love that they might well have softened the heart of the most hardened of sinners. O most sweet Jesus, how ready art Thou to forgive, how easily art Thou appeased, how plenteous art Thou in mercy! Thou didst feel more anguish on account of the blindness of man's malice, than on account of the wrong which was being done to Thee: and the working of so great wickedness caused Thee more pain than the torture of all the wounds which had been inflicted on Thee. Men did Thee all the harm they could; and Thou didst repay them by doing for them Thy best!

When to those who crucified the Pardon-Giver so great loving-kindness was shown, who can despair of the forgiveness of his sins? Cease, then, O my soul, to despair, self-accused of so many sins. Hide thyself within the deep wounds of the Crucified, kiss the wales of His stripes, clasp with loving arms the tree of life, hold fast to that most sure pledge of thy salvation, Jesus hanging on the cross. But if thou wouldst be heard speedily, if thou wouldst find grace at the hands of thy Redeemer, and wouldst obtain mercy from Him in all its fullness, thou too must, from the bottom of thy heart, forgive thy brother his trespasses against thee. Forgive him the few small matters in which he has offended thee, that God may forgive thee thy many sins against Him; and pray for his salvation as much as for thy own: so doing thou shalt find grace.

MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK.

A MEN, *I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.* Consider the boundless love and exceeding mercy which thy Lord Jesus Christ vouchsafed to show to him who hung at His right hand upon the cross. He had been a most wicked thief, but was now at length converted and a true penitent. As soon as he acknowledged his sinfulness, and was truly sorry for his evil deeds, he obtained, by Christ's sure promise, remission of his sins, and entrance into Paradise.

How blessed and life-giving are the conversion and contrition of sinners, by which a man may win a place in the kingdom of heaven. That penitent, who had been a thief, but was now a blessed confessor, although he had long and grievously sinned, in the hour of his greatest need, came to himself; and grieving with heartfelt sorrow for all he had done, humbly sought forgiveness, and obtained full pardon. He admitted that he had been guilty. He reproved his comrade for the wickedness of his blasphemy. He laments that Christ, Who is free from guilt, has been unjustly condemned. He had great faith; for he did not despair of obtaining mercy from Christ; but asked to be remembered by Him in the kingdom of God. How blessed was the opportunity of this robber, who was permitted to suffer with Christ, to die with Christ, and with Christ to enter His kingdom.

Oh, that thou mayest have grace so to live; oh, that thou mayest strive so to serve thy Lord, that when the hour of thy departure from the body shall come, thou mayest be found worthy to hear that most sweet word spoken from on high: "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK.

WOMAN, *behold thy Son. After that He said to the disciple: Behold thy Mother.* The life-blood of Mary's Son is now falling upon her drop by drop; she beholds, hanging between two thieves, Him Whom she has so often seen working mighty wonders. She sees, made like to a leper by the loathsomeness of His wounds, Him by the touch of Whose hand she has seen full many a leper cleansed. She has before her eyes, racked with pain of every kind, Him Who used to heal of every disease those who were sick. She beholds, given over to death, that Son at Whose word dead Lazarus came back to life. With such a tempest of evils is the bright-shining Star of the Sea surrounded; but a mind fixed steadfastly upon God is not to be overcome by the wickedness of men. The Mother of Jesus, constant and faithful, patient and loving, bathed in tears, stood at the foot of the cross, bringing comfort to all who are in trouble or distress by the example of her meekness and her patience.

See to it then, O faithful soul, that thou lay up in the recesses of thy heart all these things. Be brave and meek when tribulation comes upon thee. If God spared not His own Son, how canst thou in this life seek for happiness? If Christ allowed His own most holy Mother to be grievously afflicted in this world, how canst thou expect to live in this world free of worries?

O most merciful Lord Jesus, sweet Son of Mary, look upon me with those eyes full of pity, with which Thou didst behold Thy Mother and Thy disciple standing in tears at the foot of the cross, what time Thou didst commend the one to the other; make me to hear also those touching words: "Behold thy Mother."

WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK.

MY *God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*
Mark well, O my soul, this word of Jesus. Oh, the wonder of it! how the Lord of all things, Who has need of nothing, is reduced to such depth of misery that He tells forth His need into His Father's ears; that He Who orders all things as co-worker with His Father, complains that His Father has forsaken Him; that He Who upholds all things by the word of His power proclaims the burden laid upon Him to be too heavy for Him to bear; that He Who is ever ready to comfort the mourner and the oppressed, confesses Himself to be an outcast and forlorn. Of a truth, from the beginning of His Passion until now, no words so woeful had yet been spoken.

It was for me, O Christ, that in Thy passible human nature Thou didst utter this cry upon the cross. Thou didst submit to be overwhelmed by unfathomable sorrow and anguish; and thus it is that with the weak Thou canst be weak, with the mourner Thou canst mourn, with the sinner Thou canst be sad, with the oppressed Thou canst grieve, and for all Thy weak members Thou canst offer up prayer with strong crying and tears. Those words which Thou didst utter were not spoken by way of rebellion or of despair: they were the cry of Thy human nature and sensibility. Thy flesh was suffering the penalty of guilt, of which it had never known the slightest taint. Thy Body, all innocent as It was, was enduring punishment than which none could be more severe. Thy Divinity brought no relief to Thy anguish, that so for the Redemption of our race nothing might be wanting.

What heart is there so hard as not to be pierced by that exceeding bitter cry!

MAUNDY THURSDAY.

I THIRST. Our Lord Jesus Christ, Fountain of living water, besides His burning thirst for our salvation, endured an agony of bodily thirst and as one utterly poor and needy, did ask for drink, saying: "I thirst." But even this small request there was none who would heed; none was there who would even offer a cup of cold water to Him Who made all water to flow. Nay more, some of the bystanders filled a sponge with vinegar mingled with gall, and put to His sweet mouth that most bitter draught. Our gracious Jesus accepted and did taste of the nauseous draught, that as the tasting of the forbidden fruit brought death into the world, so the tasting of this bitter draught might be to us a healing remedy. Do thou, then, O disciple of Jesus, drink deeply from this bitter cup as a cure for the indulgence of thy appetites.

O Jesus, heavenly Manna, and most sweet Nectar, Thou to Whom, when Thou wast grievously athirst in Thy agony on the cross, vinegar and gall were given to drink; grant that I may be careful to remember this bitter cup of Thine that so I may not be too anxious about my bodily nourishment. Grant that I may hunger after the Meat that perisheth not, but endureth unto everlasting life. Grant that I may thirst after the Fountain of life eternal, and that I may be fed with that Living Bread which is set before those who eat at Thy Holy Table. May I be allowed to taste, be it ever so little, of its inward savor; that so I may be able experimentally to understand how refreshing is that Spirit, O Lord, which Thou as a free gift dost shed forth upon the children of grace. Amen.

GOOD FRIDAY.

I*t is finished.* Bless thy Lord Jesus Christ, Revealer of hidden mysteries, and Fulfiller of the Law and the Prophets, for His most perfect accomplishment of the Father's will in that short and welcome word with which He did close, as it were, the story of His life. "It is finished."

See to it, O follower of Christ, that thou imitate thy Master in that of which this word speaks to thee; work on while time and strength for work are given thee; carry through what thou hast begun; that so, when the evening of life's day closes in on thee, thou too, with Jesus, Who has befriended thee as it ran its course, mayest be able to say: "It is finished." Walk, therefore, in the way of true virtue; follow after righteousness; make up thy mind to fight even unto death against thy besetting sins; that so thou mayest be able to say with St. Paul: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou Who in the beginning didst jointly with the Father create all things; and now, with the coöperation of the Father, hast made all things new, Who art the brightest and most perfect Model of every virtue, and the endless Reward of every good work, direct, I pray Thee, all my actions in the way of Thy commandments, and purify and enlighten every thought of my mind. Teach me to begin, humbly and with an eye to the praise and glory of Thy blessed name, every work which I undertake; to be diligent in performing it, and to bring it to a happy end. Be Thou my recompense in the kingdom of heaven; for Thee and Thee only do I desire to possess as the Reward of my labors.

HOLY SATURDAY.

FATHER, *into Thy hands I commend My spirit.*
With a loud voice Jesus commended His soul into the Father's hands, in order that at the hour of thy departure from the world thou too shouldst not fail to have upon thy tongue, and often to repeat, the words of that blessed commendation, than which thou canst not find anything more sweet to be remembered at the last.

O most loving Jesus, Brightness of the Father's glory, and Sun of righteousness, Who for me, Thy poor unworthy servant, didst vouchsafe to suffer this most shameful form of agony; and when delivering up Thy soul upon the hill of Calvary, for the redemption of the world, didst commend It in prayer to the Father, grant that I may ever feel within me both sorrow and love for Thy most cruel death; grant that, by mortifying all my corrupt affections, I may daily exercise myself in dying with Thee; that so when the hour of my departure shall be at hand, I may be found meet to live again in the light of Thy mercies, and joyfully to enter with Thee into the bliss of Paradise. Stand by my deathbed, help me in my agony, come to me when I need Thee most, defend me from my enemies, deliver me from my distress; comfort me in my sorrow, strengthen me when I am dismayed, refresh me when I faint, take me to Thyself when my last sigh is breathed. May Thy last Word upon the cross be my last word on earth; and when speech fails me, give heed to this last wish of my soul: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit: Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, the God of Truth."

LENTEN PAMPHLETS

THE PAULIST PURPLE PAMPHLETS

HOW ARE YOU GOING TO KEEP LENT?

(4 page Leaflet) \$2.50 per thousand

A THOUGHT A DAY FOR LENT. Rev. James M. Gillis, C.S.P.
ACCEPTABLE TIME, THE. Daily Readings for Lent from
Thomas à Kempis.

CHRIST'S LAST AGONY. Rev. Henry E. O'Keeffe, C.S.P.

DID CHRIST RISE AGAIN? Rev. Paul Schanz.

FRUITS OF LENT, THE. Compiled from the Liturgy. Rev.
John J. Burke, C.S.P.

HIS GREETINGS. Mother St. Paul.

LENT IN PRACTICE. Rev. John J. Burke, C.S.P.

LENT, ITS MEANING AND PURPOSE. From the Liturgical
Year by Dom Guéranger.

PENANCE AND FASTING. Rev. B. A. Hallet, B.A.

SELECTED PRAYERS FOR LENT. Rev. James M. Gillis, C.S.P.

STATIONS OF THE CROSS. Cardinal Newman.

STATIONS OF THE CROSS. Paul Claudel. Translated from
the French by Rev. John J. Burke, C.S.P.

TENEBRAE FOR GOOD FRIDAY.

THOUGHTS ON HOLY WEEK. Selected from Thomas à
Kempis.

THOUGHTS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST. Bishop
Rosecrans.

**THE FOURTEEN STATIONS WITH A SKETCH OF THEIR
ORIGIN.** V. Rev. J. McSorley, C.S.P.

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE WAY OF THE CROSS. Rev.
John J. Burke, C.S.P.

LITTLE STATIONS ON THE WAY OF THE CROSS. Rev.
John J. Burke, C.S.P.

STATIONS OF THE CROSS FOR CHILDREN. A Religious
of the Cenacle.

SUFFERING, THE MYSTERY OF. Rev. Walter Elliott, C.S.P.
Single copies, 5 cents; \$3.50 per 100; \$30.00 per 1,000
Carriage Extra

DEVOTIONS FOR THE THREE HOURS' AGONY. By a
Paulist Father.

LITTLE CANTICLES OF LOVE. Augusta Thompson.
Single copies, 10 cents—\$6.00 per hundred
Carriage Extra

THE MASS BOOK

A very popular pocket size prayer book containing an explanation of the principal doctrines of the Church and the significance of each step of the Holy Sacrifice as well as prayers for all occasions.

Paper, 10 cents—\$6.00 per 100
Leatherette, 25 cents—\$20.00 per 100
Carriage Extra

THE PAULIST PRESS

401 West 59th Street

New York, N. Y.

Upon request a copy of every new pamphlet published by The Paulist Press is sent free to members of The Paulist League who contribute \$5.00 or more per annum.

