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PHASES  
*of the*  
SACRED  
PASSION



By REVEREND WILLIAM GRAHAM



LENTEN SERIES OF SEVEN SERMONS

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# PHASES OF THE SACRED PASSION

A Lenten Course

By REV. WILLIAM GRAHAM



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# Phases of the Sacred Passion

A LENTEN COURSE IN SIX SERMONS

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## I. THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

“And as he spoke these things, there came a cloud and overshadowed them.”—Luke ix, 34.

*SYNOPSIS.*—*Introduction.*—*The Cross both a power and a spell. No wonder, for it sums up the life, teaching and ideals of Christ, “Son of the living God,” though often directly opposed to pleasure, wealth and culture, the gods of the world; yet its attractive force irresistible. Once a badge of infamy, the Cross is now the symbol, the flag, the banner, of the conquering Christ, and His advancing kingdom. In this uplifting and glorification of the symbol, lurks the danger of our forgetting what the Cross really meant to Christ in life; and what it ought to mean in ours. Hence, the need of dwelling on the sacred Passion of Our Lord, of which the Cross is the synonym.*

I. *The Cross in shadow ever lay over the world; for it implies sacrifice, the need and accompaniment of sin. Rested personally on Our Lord all through His human life. His consciousness of the future. Horror of impending and anticipated evils. The types and prophecies of the Old Testament were to Him shadows of the Cross. The tree of life, the murder of Abel, Noah carrying wood to build the ark, Isaac bearing the wood on which he should be offered in sacrifice by his own father, the wonder-working rod of Moses, the life of David, all traced out in His mind the image of the Cross on which He should redeem the world.*

II. *As He advances in life, the shadows deepen. They outline the Cross in all its terrible features. Finally, they culminate as threatening clouds massing in the sky; and the storm they presage, breaks in full fury on Him, in the dread hour of the agony in the garden. The Passion these shadows outlined now begins.*

*Lessons.*—*Lives of most of us lie in shadow. Deep shade or thick darkness tinge, if they do not envelope, what are deemed the sunniest and merriest lives. Death, and sin, and uncertainty of the future, are enough to darken all lives. Whence came light, peace, hope and rest? From that very Cross, the shadows of which darkened the life of Christ. Under its shadow will the soul find forgiveness and peace and eternal rest.*

*Introduction.*—*A spell clings to the Cross of Christ. Since its shadow fell alike on friend and foe at Calvary, the eyes of the world have been riveted on it, either in love or hatred, in reverence or contempt. And no wonder, for the ideals of Christ are embodied in it. It is the Gospel in a single word. It stands for His life, sufferings and death; and shadows forth, too, the provision He made*



for the redemption, sanctification and salvation of men. As an historical event the Passion is past, but it ever lives in a visible and tangible form in the Cross, which, like the flag of a great world power, meets us everywhere. The attractive force of the Cross, in a world where pleasure reigns supreme, is an enigma were it not that Christ has said, "If I be lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all things to myself."

That what was once an emblem of crime, shame and degrading torture should become the ensign of the "King of Glory," the banner and flag of the conquering Christ and His every-spreading kingdom, is in itself no small wonder. And yet in this very triumph of the symbol there lurks the danger of our forgetting what its reality meant to Him when he bore it to Calvary, and for three long hours hung on it in agony. We now see the Cross, decked with roses, carved in gold, silver and ivory, glittering in the diadems of kings, and so overlook what it should mean and stand for in our lives.

Lest, then, we forget the lessons it is meant to convey, it is well for us, during this holy season of Lent, to follow Our Lord in some phases of His Passion. The Cross, like Him who died on it, is "set for the fall and resurrection of many." It will either raise us aloft, and be a ladder to heaven, or fall upon us, and crush us by its weight. Its shadow is upon us all, for weal or woe. Like the pillar of the cloud in the passage of the Red Sea, "it gives light by night" to the children of God; but is "cloud and darkness to their enemies." Among the actors in the tragedy of the Cross some repented, believed, and were saved: others hardened their hearts, mocked, and were lost. So to-day the Cross is either supreme folly or supreme wisdom. Its shadow chills or refreshes, brings spiritual life or spiritual death. The Cross was never absent from Our Lord's life; and in and through it we must be fashioned into His image. Its shadow must ever cover us.

I. The Cross did not appear to Him for the first time when He quitted the judgment hall of Pilate to bear it upon His shoulders. It haunted Him through life. Its shadow fell upon His manger-cradle at Bethlehem. He grew up under it. A beautiful modern painting represents Our Lord as a boy in the act of stretching His arms after the work of the day at the door of His humble home in Nazareth. The rays of the setting sun behind Him cast the shadow of a clearly marked cross that startles His mother and carries grief

and agony into her heart. Where there is self-sacrifice, there truly is the shadow of the Cross. This sacrifice, this Cross, is the antidote of sin. Its shadow in a manner reached heaven; for, in the great act of self-annihilation, that induced God to become man, and suffer in His human nature for sin, the Cross cast its shadow. Calvary was the culmination of the cycle of sin, and of sacrifice for sin, the falling away of the mists and shadows that lay between God and man. But there is nothing in shadow to the eye of God. All stands out in brightest light. There is no future, there is nothing prophetic, or uncertain, to Him. To Our Lord as God the Cross in anticipation, the Passion in prophecy, stood out before Him in grim reality. The hot glare of its cruel pangs ever fell upon His soul and made Him indeed "the man of sorrows." Clearness of vision, begetting a sure anticipation, intensifies coming evils. There is a sense in which shadows and presentiments are as bad, if not worse, than the reality. The shadow of the descending sword is as terrible to the victim as the object that casts it.

How far did Our Lord as man realize in anticipation the terrible sufferings of His sacred Passion? To what extent was He conscious of the doom that awaited Him? How far did the human element in consciousness blend with the divine? These are perhaps questions that will never be answered. The lamb springs into the butcher's arms, but the criminal recoils in horror at the mere threat of even a justly deserved death. In the case of the innocent "Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world," the shadow of the coming Cross revealed itself to Him in all its dread reality. What is night to us was to Him as "light of day." The Old Testament types, figures, and prophecies, dim to us, even in the light of their fulfilment, revealed themselves to Him in all their dread yet luminous significance.

The tree of life, that rose in stately splendor in Eden, promise of perpetual youth and vigor, symbolized to Him the dread tree of shame, on which in untold agony He should yield up His life to save us from eternal death and win for us life everlasting.

The cry of Abel, slain by a cruel brother, and this first just man's blood, calling to heaven for vengeance, foreshadowed His own brutal murder by the wicked brethren He loved and prayed for, and their mad cry to heaven, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." History has stored up for our warning what that cruel prayer meant to Him and to them.

Past events cast their shadows into the future. The story of the flood to the ordinary Jew was but the record of a visitation of divine wrath, which the rainbow in the sky told them could never be repeated; but to the vision of Christ it was a shadow of Calvary. He beheld the one just man of the day amid the scoffs and jeers of his brethren painfully struggling under the wood that was to build the ark wherein clean and unclean alike could find salvation; and in that just man's shadow He saw Himself amidst the jeers and imprecations of a wicked crowd wounded, weary and "bruised for our sins," bending under the beam of shame on His way to Golgotha.

It was the cruel Cross again that cast its lurid shadow on His soul when He read or heard His mother telling Him the story of Isaac carrying the wood on which, at God's command, he should be sacrificed by his own father, Abraham. The child bends under the wood, but, like an ox or a lamb, is blissfully unconscious of the doom to which he is destined. God sends an angel to stay the obedient father's hand, and furnishes another victim; but for our ungrateful sakes He sends an angel to hand the bitter cup of the Passion, that the new Isaac is to drink to the dregs. Isaac's burden was to Christ the Cross in shadow. It was no mere fancy of a Messianic mission, but His inherent divine insight into "how the Scriptures should be fulfilled" that made Him see the outline of the Cross in the life of His great prototype Moses, whom the Messiah was to succeed as a "leader like to himself" over the new people of God, His Church. As Moses He plunged the wood—the Cross He died on—into life's bitter waters and sweetened them for all time; but at what cost to Himself God and His holy angels alone can tell. Through a simple piece of wood—a mere rod—Israel's great saviour and leader performed all the wonders recorded in the story of his life. God ordered him to throw it on the ground. "He cast it down, and it was turned into a serpent: so that Moses fled from it" (Exodus iv, 3). Did not Our Lord see in this rod—the Cross—that thing of shame and pain from which all men, and even He Himself, should shrink as from a vile and loathsome thing, as "from the face of a serpent"? The shadows of signs and wonders done by Moses with that same rod must have shown Him what His own Cross should effect through "the travail of his soul." The rod of Moses again turned into a serpent, swallowed up those of the Egyptian magicians, just as the Cross of Christ, in its triumphant march, destroys all forms of worldly wis-

dom, power, and wonder. Yet the shadow of the "holy rood," that lightened our burden, that delivered us from the ten plagues of Egypt—the various forms of deadly sin under which we groaned—pressed heavily on Him. Sorrow, too, must have filled His heart at the thought of the evil use to which men would turn His Cross, the very instrument of their delivery. "He was sent for the fall, as well as for the resurrection of man in Israel"—"his Cross," a sign that should be contradicted. The last plague inflicted by the rod of Moses was of dense darkness. His Cross rejected, and scorned, covers the land with thick spiritual darkness. See the once fair lands, where the crescent has displaced the Cross, or where the Holy Rood has been ruthlessly pulled down and the graven image of Pharaoh and his satellites put in its place. This, too, was a shadow of Calvary falling on His soul.

The Cross, that "should redeem Israel from all her iniquity"—that, like the cloud, black and dark, on the side of the Egyptians, and all soul-hardened nations—was yet a "light to the Gentiles" and all "true Israelites." The people of God were baptized in the Red Sea of the blood He shed on it; but hardened sinners are drowned in it. For in its very shadow Our Lord foresaw that the Cross, which is "wisdom to the truly wise," is yet "folly and a scandal to the evil and the worldly wise." The wielding of the rod of Moses saved the people of God, but hardened the hosts of Pharaoh; so the lifting up of the Cross of Christ is a source both of salvation and perdition. Personal hatred of Christ and His Cross, upheld in the Church, is as intense to-day as when it was laid upon His shoulders amid the exultant shrieks of His enemies. The shadow of this sin was as vivid to Him as its reality is to us, and far more painful.

Though true God, Our Lord was also true man—a man among men. He even called Himself "the son of man." Now in His deep intimacy with her from whom alone He held this title, He must have often alluded to David—the pride and glory of their nation—the founder and head of the family to which they belonged. But the vision of His mind did not regard David in all the pomp, splendor and glory of dominion; but David, poor, hunted down by his enemies, hiding in dens and caverns—David, the bard of sorrow, over whose soul the "waters of affliction had flowed." He saw in David the shadow of His own unquestionable royalty; but it was the royalty of the palace of Caiphas, and hall of Pilate—the royalty denoted by the crown of thorns, the purple rag, and the scepter of

the reed. His courtiers are the mocking soldiers, who, with cruel gibes and coarse jests, bow the knee before Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews"; and the throne they prepare for Him is the hard knotty cross. This was the kingly dignity that now cast its shadow on His soul. True, He foresaw that He should reign in absolute sovereignty over His kingdom, and in the hearts of all true Israelites, to the end of time; but this vision was clouded by the shadow of the hosts that should reject His royalty, do their utmost to dismember His kingdom, abandon, in short, Him, "the fountain of living water, and dig to themselves fountains that hold not water."

He was thus ever "the man of sorrows." A criminal, condemned to death without reprieve, knows not the sweets of rest after toil, the joys of fancy, the pleasures of hope. His punishment is ever before him; for anticipation of pain is even worse than the pain itself. So was it with Our Lord, the all holy and all perfect. His was not a soul hardened by sin, or a body besotted with vice; but refined and delicate; and so fitted for pain and sacrifice beyond words to describe. We can thus understand how the dark shadows of His coming Passion gathered over His soul in pondering over the revelations made to prophet, seer and king. The details, as described by holy David and Isaias, are startling in their realism. What must they have been to the Chief Sufferer, who as Eternal Wisdom revealed them. "The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his bruises we are healed." "All we, like sheep, have gone astray: and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." "For the wickedness of my people have I struck him" (Isaias liii, 6, 8).

II. Deeper and deeper fell the shadows of the Cross as He advanced in years—through the long period of His hidden life at Nazareth, and the short term of His public career. Even in the glimpses of kingship and glory, accorded on Mount Thabor, and on His solemn entry into Jerusalem, Calvary and its Cross were ever in view. In full consciousness of the treatment He was to receive, He set His face steadfastly "to go to Jerusalem," "he went before them" to keep the pasch. How clearly impressed the shadow of His coming sufferings were upon His mind we gather from His own words, "Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the son of man shall be betrayed to the chief priests, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles, and they shall mock him, and

spit on him, and scourge him and kill him, and the third day he shall rise again" (Mark x, 33, 34).

He was thus drawing near to the valley of the shadow. The triumphant entry on Palm Sunday forms the receding light that lengthens the shadows of the days that follow. His whole life was thus the Passion in anticipation—the Cross casting its dark shadow before. His thirty-three years were but the foreground of the Crucifixion.

The shadows keep deepening, till they culminate in Gethsemani; and the fury of the storm, raised by the powers of darkness, breaks in upon His soul. The spot where the Passion proper began looks calm and peaceful to-day, as it lies sleeping in the sun, under the shadow of Olivet, and facing the dark frowning rocks that encircle Jerusalem. The old olive trees, or shoots from them, that once cast their shadows on the Man of Sorrows still survive to remind the pilgrim of that night of deep gloom, when the soul of the Son of Man, weighed down with unspeakable anguish, was "sorrowful even unto death." Why the God-man, whose face on Thabor "did shine as the sun," and at sight of whom legions of evil spirits fled in terror, should now crouch and tremble like a terrified babe, where there was nothing to alarm Him save the weird moaning of the wind and the shadows of the olive branches, is one of the mysteries of the Passion. Thus far it is only the anticipation, merely the shadow of coming evil, that presses on His soul. The prophet Isaias foretold, as subsequent events showed, that under lash and thorn, and nail, and insult, He should be "dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and should not open his mouth" (Isaias liii, 7). Yet here, under the mere shadow of the Cross, He cries out in anguish, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." He felt it would seem the suspension of His divinity—the marshalling of the powers of evil, hell let loose on His humanity, in its loneliness. Holy souls when nearest to God in the keenest anguish have deemed Him absent. In the maelstrom of fast encircling woes we seem to hear Him utter the Psalmist's words, "The waters have come in even to my soul. I stuck fast in the mire of the deep; and there is no sure standing. I am come into the depths of the sea, and a tempest hath overwhelmed me" (Psalms, lxxiii). He feels Himself now the "scapegoat" of our race. He is coming into close contact with sin; and the anguish of His soul at the view of our iniquities, and

the little profit sinners would draw from His Passion, cause the blood to ooze from His body. "Quae utilitas in sanguine meo." God is punishing Him. He is veiling Himself that "by his bruises we may be healed." "For the sins of my people I struck him." Wicked men are plotting His death; the tramp of their armed hirelings, led by the traitor disciple, breaks in upon the silence of the night. Dim lights are flickering in the palace of Caiphas; and the shadows of the Cross are melting away before the grim reality. What a terrible share they had in the sufferings of Our Saviour we learn from the agonizing cry they wrested from His sacred lips ere those of the traitor came in contact with them, "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me, yet not my will but thine be done."

We, too, dear brethren, live under a cloud. Dark shadows overhang the brightest and sunniest lives. Tears follow smiles, even in sinless, light-hearted children. The gayest and most frivolous have longer spells of gloom than of pleasure, say what they may. The future, in most cases, throws more shadow than light upon the present. Death alone casts a deep dark shadow over all lives in cutting short all present and prospective pleasures. Even to those who have lost all belief in a future life it is a marfeast and a destroyer.

People shrink from the Cross, yet it is the retrospect of our past crosses, not of our pleasures, that brings us peace, joy and rest. And why? Because Christ in embracing has exalted the Cross and ennobled the idea of sacrifice that it implies. He alone, in the might of His divine power, could have changed the Cross, symbol of degrading crime, worse than gallows or guillotine, into an altar, a throne and a pulpit. Its very shadow to Him was life-long pain; but to us it is light, revealing the mercy, the love, the tender bounty of God. Thrice did He sink under its weight; but He has made it sweet, and light, and easy to us.

It is a law, and yet a mystery, that in all departments of life, not pleasure, but sacrifice, leads to glory. "No cross, no crown." The way to bliss leads not by Thabor, but by Calvary. Suffering, too, and sacrifice, are not only personal, but vicarious. We are not isolated in our joys, no more are we in our sorrows. We suffer not only *with* but *for* one another. His was the transcendent vicarious offering; ours derive all their value from His. Every sorrow, every

pain, every act of unselfish sacrifice, in union with His, bears the divine stamp of the Cross.

No wonder the shadow of the Cross fell heavy on Our Lord; for it was the shadow of a wicked world's sin. It points out the awfulness of moral evil and the need of a divine Saviour. Reading sin in the gloom and darkness of Gethsemani and Calvary will help us to realize how fearful it must be, since a divine victim was required to atone for it. Sin it was that nailed this victim to the Cross. "All we, like sheep, have gone astray: . . . and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." He was offered because it was His own will. "He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer" (Isaias liii, 6, 7). While revealing the dread malice of sin which nailed Christ to the Cross, it preaches the necessity of blotting out sin in our own souls by sincere repentance and the application of Christ's cleansing blood in the Sacrament of Penance.

The Cross has introduced a new standard into life. It stands, and ever will stand, in diametrical opposition to the world and its ways, and thoughts, and ideals. It is for us, then, who love the Saviour, to love His Cross, inseparable from Him; to nestle under its shadow—to make it our banner, our flag, our standard. It is the only way to heaven. "Via crucis, via lucis." To follow the way of the Cross is to follow Christ; and "he who follows me walketh not in darkness," saith the Lord.

## II. THE BETRAYAL OF JUDAS

“Jesus said to him: Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?”  
—Luke xxii, 48.

*SYNOPSIS.—Introduction.—The passion proper begins with the betrayal of Judas. Desertion, or betrayal on part of friends, when help and sympathy most needed, one of the hardest trials to bear. Jesus left alone, in a sea of sorrow. His very love of “His own” measure of the pangs He felt, in desertion of all, and betrayal on part of one. Decadence of Judas long a source of grief to our Saviour. Judas, type of the traitor and informer to all time.*

*I. Was a time server. Saw our Lord losing in popularity, and throwing away His chances of becoming a king. Judas dreamed only of place and power and wealth in a restored Jewish sovereignty. A spiritual kingdom had no meaning for him. Avarice his main vice, would at least gain something from wreck of his hopes. Bargains for betrayal of Christ. Story of the betrayal.*

*II. Feels himself a Cain. His crime haunts him as a specter. His sin has found him out. The strange thing is, he seems to repent and atone for his crime by returning the accursed money he earned by it; but his sorrow is loveless and hopeless; consequently, ineffectual. His grief was human: no divine element in it, could not win pardon. One act of true contrition, a movement of genuine repentance, would have restored him to grace; but alas! it was too late. Tragic death of Judas.*

*III. Judas, a type of those who fail to live up to grace of their state—the bad priest, the bad bishop, the bad religious, and the rest. First bad communicant. Highest call may result in failure. Lessons taught in betrayal of Jesus. Are we traitors to Christ? Do not many of us hear the Master whisper into our ears, “Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?”*

*Introduction.—The storm that was gathering over “the Man of Sorrows” broke upon Him in Gethsemani. “Great as the sea is thy sorrow,” was the brief prophetic description of the Passion. Excess marked its every stage, from the agony in the garden, till death on the Cross. There are depths in the sea that no plummet has yet sounded. So are there in the sufferings of Christ, though saints and divines have been exploring and sounding them for centuries.*

The great sacrifice consummated on Calvary begins with the betrayal of the divine victim by Judas. In the whole gamut of mental pain endured by Our Lord none was more keenly felt than the desertion of His Apostles. The abandonment of friends at the moment when we stand most in need of their help and sympathy adds an acute pang to sorrow; but the Apostles were more than

mere friends to Christ, they were His dearest and most intimate associates. He loved His little community, "His own," as He called them, "to the end," with infinite tenderness. Hence the deep pain He felt in their shameful desertion. A special mark of infamy, however, clings to the memory of Judas. His very name, indeed, stands as the synonym of the most hateful and loathsome class known to us, the traitor or betrayer of the cause or society to which he belongs. Judas is the type of the false witness and perjured disciple.

To note the decadence, the gradual hardening of heart—for the sin of Judas, unlike that of Peter, was no sudden impulse—in the case of His chosen Apostle, was ever a secret, pent-up grief of the Saviour. He felt as a good father or mother feels on seeing son or daughter wilfully treading the downward path to ruin—powerless to hinder or recall. For free will is so high a gift, so potent an endowment, that it ties, so to say, the very hand of God. It was a standing grief to the little band that formed the inner circle of the friends of "the Master," for in spite of their rough, blunt ways, and subsequent flight and terror, they were simple, and straight, and loyal, and loved Our Lord dearly and sincerely. Yet they heard Him repeatedly say, "One of you shall betray me," and from their intimate knowledge of his character must have suspected Iscariot. For one thing they were all Galileans, while he was a Jew.

The soul of union is the faith, the trust, the loyalty of its members. To sell one's country, to betray one's friends, to barter away the life and liberty of others, is deemed the worst form of criminal offense. Every cause and nation has its traitors; but, as I said, Judas is the standing type and common name for all. Others trafficked in the lives and destinies of men and nations; but he sold for thirty pieces of money his God, and, as far as in him lay, endangered the highest and holiest cause the world has ever seen. Justly, therefore, is his name held in execration to-day. Like all the actors in the tragedy of the Passion, Judas lives as a type—the type of the traitor—for all time.

The story of the betrayal is quickly told. It was no sudden impulse that drove Judas to hand his Master over to the fury of His enemies. It was not his first, but his last, gross act of disloyalty to Christ. Self had usurped the place of God in his heart. The betrayal was the last link in a chain of sin. By words, and signs, and deeds, Our Lord had repeatedly striven to stay the downward

course of His erring disciple. But his ruling passion—greed for gold—had gained the mastery. Like all sinners, he had fallen into the devil's trap: "Do my work, said the evil one, and I shall do yours." "All these things I will give thee if thou wilt fall down and adore me," a tempting bargain; but, as Judas afterward found to his cost, a lying and deceitful one. But needless to moralize at this stage. "The die is cast." Christ, Judas thinks, is on the losing side. He is growing unpopular. He either would not or could not "restore the glory of the kingdom of Israel." He is a mere dreamer; and thirty pieces of solid silver, in his then frame of mind, were worth far more to him than all the visionary gain of a spiritual kingdom. The bargain with Christ's enemies is struck, and Judas, at the head of a hundred and twenty hirelings, makes for the garden of Gethsemani.

There Our Lord and Saviour was in the throes of that stage of His Passion that we name, "the agony in the garden." It is the first of the five sorrowful mysteries, the beginning of the harrowing scenes that terminate on Calvary. Christ is in the deep waters of distress—alone, forsaken, abandoned, even by God. He begins to feel the pangs of the victim "stricken for our sins," "bruised for our iniquities." In the abyss of His depression of soul He seeks the fellowship and sympathy of His chosen companions; but they sleep while He watches in pain. "I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none; and for one that would comfort me, and there was none" (Ps. lxxviii). The response to His request is the approach of the betrayer, and that betrayer His own disciple. "If my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it. But thou, a man of one mind with me, my guide and my familiar, who didst take sweet meats together with me in the house of God, we walked with consent" (Ps. liv). "Judas immediately going up to him saith, Hail, Rabbi, and he kissed him," an embrace which Our Lord bent down to accept, for tradition tells us that Judas was a man of low stature, with dark scowling features and obese. He is now the moving spirit of the Lord's enemies, the leader of the "many dogs that encompass him," "the council of the malignant that now hold him besieged," "of them that open their mouths against the Christ, as a lion ravening and roaring" (Ps. xxi).

Judas is now filling up the measure of his iniquities. He seals his own doom. "Better for that man if he had never been born."

Satan now enters into him, and he becomes "the son of perdition." The prophet's words seem to fit him to the letter, "Set thou the sinner over him, and may the devil stand at his right hand. When he is judged may he go out condemned. May there be none to help him; because he remembered not to show mercy; but persecuted the poor man and the beggar, and the broken in heart to put him to death" (Ps. cviii). The beads of blood were still pearly off that "Poor Man's" brow. That outcast and brokenhearted One was being "wounded for our sins," "God-stricken and forlorn," that we might be healed. The look cast by Christ, as He returned his embrace, burned into the traitor's soul.

"The multitude with swords and clubs soon did their work." The feeble attempt at defense is quickly overcome. The terrified disciples broke and fled. "The shepherd is struck and the sheep are scattered." True, the whole hireling gang fell back in confusion at His word and glance, a proof that he was no mere helpless victim of material force; but this "was their hour and that of the powers of darkness," and He goes as a meek lamb to the slaughter, "opening not his mouth." Christ, the Man-God, is gagged and led to judgment. Five times is He tried, or rather five times does He undergo the mocking ordeal of a trial. He is "in the net of the fowler." His enemies have been "those of his own household." No human help is nigh, and by the "high will of heaven" divine help is arrested. "I am become as a man without help. I looked on the right hand, and there was no one that would know me. There is no one that hath regard to my soul" (Ps. cxli). He "will tread the winepress alone," He will accomplish the work "his heavenly Father gave him to do."

II. Meanwhile, what of Judas, the main actor in this phase of Our Lord's Passion. He, too, has done his work. He has sold his God. He has betrayed his Lord and Master, whom, if he did not fully realize to be God, he yet knew to be far beyond all other men, just, pure, holy and innocent. He has the wages of sin in his girdle, but it burns. The devil, he finds out, is a bad paymaster. His dupes have ever the worst of the bargain, even in this life; and chief among them is Judas. Money, he discovers, is not everything, and, above all, money ill-gotten. Conscience, long dormant in petty thefts, has a rude awakening in gross crime. "His sin has found him out." He flattered himself that he might deceive his Master under the mask of friendship; and that, most likely, Christ would

escape his enemies, as He had so often done before. In this way he would cheat the hypocritical crew leagued against the Lord and satisfy his own greed for gain at their expense. But now his well-laid plan has failed. Christ is a manacled prisoner in the hands of His foes. Perjured witnesses are now, perhaps, swearing His life away; and at any moment He may be "delivered to the Gentiles," the brutal soldiery of cruel Rome, to be tortured to death on the Cross. No supernatural agency has intervened to save Him. The priests and Pharisees are triumphant. Judas is in the grip of despair. The brand of Cain is upon him; for he has slain, not only a brother, but a "prophet of the most high God"—one in some mysterious way the Son of God. The pale face of the Master, with its look of anguish, and tears of blood trickling down His brow, rise up before him, and His last words of mingled pity and reproach, "Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" burn into his very soul. His sin haunts him like a specter. Entangled in the net of evil he has woven round his soul, he wanders aimlessly about the dark valley of Hinnom till the morning dawned. Unable to bear any longer the crushing weight of the blood money he carried, he rushed to the Temple, where the priests, with broad phylacteries around their brows, but venom and hatred for God's anointed in their hearts, had come to pray, he casts the thirty pieces of money at their feet, exclaiming, "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." The man they had suborned and tempted to betray an innocent life must, by his words, have roused them to a sense of the guilty plot in which they were engaged. They, too, must have felt the lash of conscience; but they were hardened hypocrites—"blind and leaders of the blind." Their sole response to their guilty dupe, as they spurned him from their presence, was, "What is that to us, look thou to it" (John v, 4)—words that presaged his doom and theirs.

The strange part of Judas' story is that he seemed to repent, and yet was not forgiven. Like penitent David, he cries out, "Peccavi," "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood," and casts at the feet of his fellow criminals the price of his treason. But alas for him, his sorrow was loveless and hopeless. The necessary elements of true contrition were wanting. It was *human* not *divine* grief, founded only in disappointment, disillusion and despair—a mere human experience of the "hard ways of sin." Even then an act of sincere sorrow would have restored him to grace. Christ was

at the gate. He stood knocking. But Judas lingered, hesitated, and was lost. The grace went to Peter. His lamp was out. Its oil had run dry. The glance of Christ that softened Peter hardened Judas. The soil of his heart, through long lack of tilling, had grown hard and thorny; so that good seed could not root in it.

The remainder of his story is told in few words. Rushing out from the Temple, into the long gloomy valley of Hinnom—the Tophat of old—ere night's shadows had rolled away, despair on his face, hell in his soul, he came to the summit of the rocky heights around, and fastening his neck with the girdle or halter he was wearing to the nearest tree, he let himself swing over the abyss below. Striking against the jagged rock he burst asunder. Darkness passes with the night. Sunless caverns and the dark depths of the sea may one day be lighted up by the orb of day, but alas! on the soul of Judas, the betrayer of the Lord, the light of God's countenance will never shine. For those that live without repentance there is a ray of hope, but none for those that die without. Better for that man "never to have been born," says Our Lord. What He thus said of Judas He meant also for us. When Christ on His way to Calvary told the "daughters of Jerusalem to weep, not for him, but for themselves and their children," was mother, or wife, or sister of Judas among the mourners?

III. To us, whose eyes, now open, are riveted on the person and office of the victim of the treason of Judas, his crime seems monstrous and unparalleled. Time has but deepened and heightened it. With Satan, he is pre-eminently the "adversary of God," a "son of perdition."

And yet, as St. Augustine says, "There is nothing that one man does which another may not do if not helped by him by whom all things were made." "What is this that hath been done? The same that shall be done" (Eccl. i, 9). Judas sold Christ for thirty pieces of silver. Are there not thousands, knowing more about Christ's person than Judas did, who daily sell Him for less. Their crime is less striking, less picturesque in the bad sense of the term, but in God's sight none the less real. All down the ages has not holy Church to mourn over those who sell her to the enemies of her spouse? Who were the great heresiarchs but men who had once, like Judas, feasted on the body and blood of the Lord—nay, had power "to *do this*" in remembrance of Him; and yet after

went forth to betray Him. Of them, as of Judas, Christ could say, "I planted thee a chosen vineyard: how then art thou turned unto me into that which is good for nothing and strange vineyard" (Jerem. ii, 21). Woe to "the salt that has lost its savor." Life gives and spreads life; but the dead spread infection and death. So with Judas and his like.

His fall warns us that a high call and even close intimacy with Christ are no guarantee of present holiness, much less of future salvation. It reminds us all, priests and people, teachers and scholars, in the school of Christ, that we must "work out our salvation in fear and trembling." It is what we *become*, and grow *into*, at the finish of our career, and not what we were at the start, that determines our worth and fate. The tone and color of our thoughts regarding the character of Judas are usually taken from his last fearful crime and tragic end. Yet he was once an enthusiastic follower of the Lord. He was once young and innocent. Nay, such was his zeal in Christ's cause, such his eagerness to "seek the kingdom of God and his glory," that he was admitted into the inner circle, the privileged twelve who should follow the Lord wheresoever He went. He was one of Christ's bodyguard, in short. It is quite possible that his motives at first for "leaving all things and following Our Lord" were not of the highest. Like some of the other raw, untrained disciples, he may have had visions of an earthly kingdom of God, wherein he might play an important part. The new light that had arisen in the East, the great Messiah, might yet restore "the glory of Israel" and drive the hated strangers from the land. He differed from the others in never rising to the idea of a spiritual kingdom at all. He was shrewd, pushing and worldly-wise, like the rest of his tribe; and hence he was made treasurer of Our Lord's household. He carried the bag.

For a time popularity was forced upon Our Lord; but He ever shrank from it. The people would fain have made Him king, but He ever withdrew from His admirers. "He hid himself," the Gospel says. Then they began to doubt as to whether He was the Messiah, the Son of David, the promised one of Israel at all, and among them Judas. True, this popularity flickered up again on the Palm Sunday, but it had long been on the wane. Those who hailed Him as King at the beginning of the week were shrieking loudly for His blood ere its close. The mob is ever fickle if its idol is no flatterer. They did not want "a kingdom of heaven," and one

“of this world” Our Lord came not to found. Hence their rejection of Him.

Judas now deemed Our Lord’s mission a failure. He doubted, waned in his loyalty, and turned traitor. He would gain something from the wreck of his Master’s visionary kingdom, and to compass this end sold that Master for a paltry thirty pieces of silver.

This was the culmination of a long series of sins of avarice. This Gospel says he was a thief. He had begun by petty thefts from the common purse. Filthy lucre, greed, gain, howsoever got, hurried him on from bad to worse, till every shred of self-respect, all character, as we say, was gone. At one period of life no doubt he would have shuddered at the excesses into which he fell; but like all set sinners, he grew worse and worse, till, after his crowning act of infamy, he died unwept for and unrepentant.

The fate of Judas illustrates the truth that there is no standing still in the path either of righteousness or unrighteousness. We go forward or backward. We turn *to* the light or *from* it, we go up the “mountain of God” or down it. Like a boat on a swift-flowing river, if we pull not vigorously *up* stream we drift aimlessly and helplessly *down* it. “He who perseveres not to the end, he who putteth his hand to the plow and looketh back is not worthy of the kingdom.”

Like all actors in the Passion, Judas is a type for all time. He is, by no means, an isolated personage. The part he played in the tragedy of redemption is repeated and re-echoed in the story of all traitors to every good, holy and God-like cause, before and since.

As with Judas, money, the hunger for gold, engenders traitors and informers, and both sows and feeds their vices. As I said, every land, every cause has had its Judases, who put self and wealth before honor, before truth, before their country, or before their God.

Ask those who, called to preach Christ, and Him crucified, yet in views and conduct preach the world and its vanities; ask the many who follow Our Lord for a share of “the loaves and fishes,” and deny or desert Him in the hour of His loneliness and need; ask treacherous wives and unfaithful husbands are *they* not walking in the footsteps of Judas? Inside the fold of the Master, Christ is daily betrayed with a kiss—outwardly knelt to, honored and addressed as Lord, inwardly disbelieved, scorned, handed over, gagged and bound, to His enemies.

*Conclusion.*—Brethren, “what has been may be again.” The infamy of Judas finds its counterpart in many Christian lives to-day. As we read the Holy Father’s late appeal to some erring brethren, to renounce *worldliness* under the mask of *modernism*, do we not seem to hear Christ in His vicar uttering the words, “Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?” Let the story of Judas warn us against false confidence. The appearance of health often masks internal rottenness and decay. Flowers may bloom and wave over dead men’s graves. The Cross, the banner of Christ, may flutter over our heads, and His image glitter on our breasts, while that of his adversary is engraven indelibly on our hearts. Are we consciously nursing any vice that effects a cleavage between Christ and us? Then we are not of “*his own*,” but Satan’s. Are we victims of avarice, or any other deadly sin? If so, we are digging our souls’ graves. We are trenching in the heart those cisterns that hold not the waters of grace. Do we not hear the warning voice of Christ, “Amen I say to you, one of you shall betray me.” Let us pause ere we, too, fall into the guilty ways of Judas, who began by loving and serving Christ, and ended by betraying Him. Are there not souls here present into whose ears the voice of Jesus seems to whisper, “Judas, dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?”

## III. THE DENIAL OF PETER

"I say to thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, till thou thrice deniest that thou knowest me."—Luke xxii, 34.

*SYNOPSIS.—Introduction.—The betrayal of Judas and denial of Peter twin mental sorrows of Jesus in His sacred Passion. Christ, as He stood before Annas, the traitorous kiss of Judas still lingering on His lips, hears the oaths of His chief Apostle, denying that he knew Him! The ring of evil drawing tightly around Him; "No friend, no helper near."*

*I. Christ and His Apostles. What they were to each other. Character of Peter. His strength and his weakness. His imprudent zeal in the garden of olives, and subsequent flight with the rest. His half-hearted return, and following "afar off." Story of the denial. His repentance. How it differed from that of Judas. Life-long term of sorrow, especially on hearing the cock crow.*

*II. Peter's fall, not one of malice; due to weakness, in hour of trial. Causes of his fall—self-confidence, impulsiveness, inconstancy. Teaches us to avoid occasion of sin, especially bad company.*

*III. His sincere repentance. The triple confession he made in atonement for his triple denial. Two monuments in Rome. Keep memory of St. Peter fresh. In this phase of Our Lord's Passion, two thoughts strike us—the loving mercy of Christ to the fallen, and next, the speedy and earnest repentance of Peter.*

*Conclusion.—Practical exhortation to rise from sin to true repentance.*

*Introduction.—*One Apostle betrays his Master, another denies Him. This double apostasy must have deepened the anguish of Our Lord in the bitter sorrows of His Passion. To be deserted by one's closest friends in the hour of need is a crushing blow, but to be betrayed and ignored is still worse. As He stood before Annas, shackled like a thief or murderer caught red-handed in crime, the treacherous kiss of Judas still lingering on his lips, the oaths of Peter, denying that he knew Him, struck in upon His ears. The ring of evil was fast closing in around the "Holy One of Israel." Hell was loose. He stood alone, deserted and undefended, in a circle of triumphant and pitiless foes. Judas has done his satanic work. His loving friend and Master is now a wounded bird in the net of the fowler, a meek and gentle lamb thrown to the wolves; and to add to the pangs of His stricken heart the one disciple who had loudly professed fidelity to the bitter end declares with an oath that He was an utter stranger to him. "Oh all ye who pass by the way, see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow." "I have trodden the winepress alone." "I looked around and there was no helper."

The denial of Peter as a phase of Our Lord's Passion is the subject of my discourse to-day. In the Apostle's fall and repentance we may learn a lesson of love and sympathy for Our Lord and of useful warning to ourselves.

I. The story of Peter's denial is a sad and a base one. The scene in the garden of Gethsemani is over. Our Lord, bound with rough cords, is led, as a coarse criminal, to undergo a sort of preliminary trial before Annas, the deposed high priest, who still wields great influence with his son-in-law Caiphas, the actual holder of the office. The full court of the Sanhedrin could not legally try prisoners by night. The good Shepherd was struck, and His little flock of timid Galileans were scattered to the winds—Peter, who had made a brave show of resistance, fleeing with the rest. The Apostles were all deeply attached to the person of Our Lord, and had boundless faith in His power and Messianism, as far as they understood the term. As for His spiritual kingdom—a Church embracing all nations—they did not rise to what it meant. The Holy Ghost had not yet come down upon them. They dreamt of place and power in a restored earthly kingdom, like that of David. They were proud of Our Lord, so to say. They thought no earthly power could prevail against Him. Had He not stilled the angry waves, conquered legions of devils more powerful than men, confounded His enemies, restored the dead to life? Surely, sinners would have no power over Him. God would intervene to protect His Holy One. But when they saw their divine Master in the clutches of the law, bound and dragged away, a helpless prisoner, their faith and courage gave way. The instinct of self-preservation gained the mastery. They shrank from danger, and fled. Peter, it is true, drew the sword, and even committed an act of violence in his Master's defense, but he soon lost heart, wavered and fled. From what we glean of his character in the Gospel and elsewhere, we have grounds for inferring that he was impulsive, generous and enthusiastic, but irresolute and inconstant. He idolized his Master, and in his warmhearted way ever gave vent to the feelings uppermost in his heart, of unselfish love, loyalty, devotion and blind faith. He deeply resented baseness and treachery, and was roused to indignation at the bare thought of one of his companions betraying his Lord. He would die, he said, and no doubt sincerely meant it, rather than deny Him. But panic seized him in common with the others, and Christ is left to "tread the winepress alone." *Tempta-*

tion reveals weakness as well as strength, and so did it in Peter's case. He was over-confident in his own power. He forgot that true friendship and love are best tested in the hour of misfortune and trial.

Peter soon grew ashamed of his cowardice and desertion, turns back and follows his Master "*afar off.*" Previously, to get near his Lord, he had not hesitated to trust his feet to the treacherous waves; but now, cold, tepid, irresolute, he follows Him "*afar off.*" His place was to stand near his Master in the supreme moment of danger, and, if necessary, die with Him, rather than lounge near a snug fire in the midst of his Master's enemies. But we anticipate.

Gaining admittance through the influence of another disciple, probably St. John, personally known either to the servants or even high priest himself, Peter makes his way to a fire, lighted in the outer court by the soldiers and attendants, and stood warming himself, as if in nowise interested in the cruel proceedings taking place a few paces away. Laden with chains, His face covered with bruises and filthy spittle, the Lord and Master stands in mock trial before a venomous judge, while the disciple listens with apparent unconcern to the gibes and jeers of those around. Eyeing him curiously, a servant maid, the only one of her sex who seems to have taken an unsympathetic part in the Passion, said, "Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth; but he denied saying, I neither know nor understand what thou sayest" (Mark xiv). "Woman, I know him not." Conscience-stricken for his base denial, he moves out to the vestibule to escape notice. "He went forth before the court, and the cock crew." The ominous sound merely told the approach of dawn. The maid persistently clung to her opinion, and told it to others, some of whom followed Peter out, accosting him with the words, "Thou also art one of them, And again he denied with an oath, that I know not the man" (Matt. xxvi). He still lingers about, nailed to the spot, fascinated as by some secret spell. Meanwhile, insults and blows are raining on his sacred Master's person. Peter's place, and he knew it, was either by his Master's side or out from the hall, away from danger. He, too, was chained and gagged. Grace was rejected, the voice of conscience unheeded. Evil had fastened on him, and now a third, and his last, fall crowns his apostasy. Not that he lost his faith, for Peter's faith never faltered, either *before* or *after* the divine promise, but he wavered in loyalty, he failed to "confess Christ before men," nay, more, he

openly denied, was ashamed of his Master, while all the time secretly believing in Him. The very strength of his faith and depth of his love made him all the more guilty, and intensified his Master's grief. He still flitted about the fire, like a moth round a candle, till "they came that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou art also one of them, for even thy speech doth discover thee. Then he began to curse and swear that he knew not the man" (Matt. xxvi). Thus, while Christ is victim of the hollow mockery of a trial, the sole purpose of which is conviction, *within*, His chief disciple is, with oaths and imprecations, denying Him *without*. His boasted devotion and undying love end in denial and blasphemy. He was now fully alive to his guilt. Could he ever dare to look His beloved Master in the face again? It was then that the herald of the dawn carried its third warning message to his heart. While Our Lord was being led through the court, either to prison or to Caiphaz, he cast a glance upon Peter. The very oaths of His recreant disciple had probably reached His ears. Not a word passed between them. The Gospel merely says, "The Lord looked on Peter"; but that look spoke volumes of sadness, of pity and of love. It penetrated the heart and flashed light, and sorrow, and love. The fountains of the heart's abyss were opened, and tears of true contrition, of mingled shame and self-condemnation gushed forth. "And going forth he wept bitterly." The true Peter, the impulsive, warmhearted disciple and lover of Jesus, stood revealed. The glance of Jesus had burned into his soul, and the sinner left the hall of judgment a penitent saint.

Jesus had looked also on Judas with inviting tenderness, but there was no penitential response. Black despair and long cherished habits of evil shut out the grace of God, whereas in Peter it found ready entrance and glad welcome. Judas typifies the repentance of despair, Peter that of hope and love. Sin ever *does* and ever *will* create a Judas or a Peter. It leads either to despair and impenitence or to hope and sorrow. Peter, model of true penitents, did not go on in sin "grieving the Holy Spirit," but turned at once to God by sincere repentance. Tradition tells us that his cheeks were ever afterward furrowed with the tears shed in the bitterness of grief for his fall, and that he never heard the cock crow at break of day without dropping on his knees and asking his dear Lord for mercy and contrition.

Peter's fall is a striking object lesson to all time of man's inherent

spiritual weakness. The head of the apostolic college, "Christ's other self," trained under the Master's own eye, falls, swiftly, deeply, shamefully. A prying woman's curiosity, dread of the jeers and gibes of worthless scoundrels, made him deny the highest, the noblest and tenderest of masters. He was neither traitor nor coward in the usual sense of the terms. Far from it. He was ever to the front, the most fearless and zealous of the twelve. Withal, he fell; and so may we all. If the oaks and cedars yield so easily to the storm, what may we not expect from feeble twigs and bending branches!

II. Peter's sin was not one of malice. He fell through moral weakness. He was not, and never had been, hopelessly bad. His character had not grown vicious through long sinning and resistance to the light, as in the case of Judas, the betrayer. No one becomes good or bad through single acts. There were weak elements, dangerous tendencies in his character that, if not repressed, might have led to final ruin. St. Theresa, we are told, was shown the place reserved for her in hell had she not overcome certain dangerous inclinations of soul—tendencies, likely, that were, in the world's eyes, the basis of her popularity and the esteem and love she ever inspired. So with St. Peter. He was a very human and very loveable character. But there were faults, possibly seeds of great vices. There was, in the first place, a strain of overweening self-confidence, that, in the spiritual order, is fatal. Self-reliance is deemed a good and strong point in character, and under reserve this is true; but unless built or rooted on confidence in God's grace it is a hindrance. "I can do all things," says St. Paul, almost boastfully, yet he adds, "in him who strengthens me." Both in nature and in grace God's part is the main factor; but in the spiritual order particularly, both "to do and to wish" what is right come from Him.

St. Peter trusted to his physical strength and natural love of Christ. He was ready to draw his sword against a cohort; he threw himself into the sea, as I said, to get near his Lord; yet he trembled before a servant maid. Now it is just moral courage, and not brute strength, that is wanted in life. It is not physical daring, but strength of will—the heroism of grace to stand out in defense of God and righteousness—that keeps us spiritually safe. In this Peter failed. So self-trustful was he that he paid no heed to Our Lord's warning prophecy. His impulsiveness, born of self-confi-

dence, to rush into, and worse still to remain in, a dangerous situation, shrank and failed in the supreme moment of trial. True inward strength, springing from reliance in God, was wanting, and his boasted loyalty proved to be as chaff before the wind. "Though I should die with thee yet shall I never deny thee," were brave words, and would have been justifiable, had they been qualified by an expression of confidence in Almighty God. He trusted to unaided nature, and nature failed him in the moment of spiritual danger. It is easy to be a hero or a martyr in dream and fancy, but quite another thing to be so in action. It is easy to pitch one's tent on Thabor, but a very different matter to take one's stand on Calvary. To stand by Christ's side in distributing "the loaves and fishes," calming the waves, expelling evil spirits, holding the multitude spellbound by His words, refuting the false notions current in the piety and wisdom of the day, Peter found a much easier task than to cling to his Lord in chains, buffeted, spat upon, "the scorn of men and the outcast of the people." And yet the latter is the only true test of discipleship, as Peter fearlessly showed in after life.

Did time permit we might add other grounds of explanation of Peter's fall, his impulsiveness and consequent lack of steadiness. Peter had to be taught that God is not to be served by fits and starts, but steadily and perseveringly. He was full of fiery zeal and enthusiasm at one moment, and just as tepid and lukewarm the next. He would wage war on Christ's enemies singlehanded rather than be separated from Christ, and yet very soon after he was following Him "*afar off*." His intemperate zeal in the garden is in striking contrast to his base coldness and apostasy in the council hall. Herein he is a type of the lukewarm and disloyal followers of Our Lord, who serve Him "*afar off*"—who, during missions or retreats, or on certain occasions, are zealous to the verge of imprudence, but who soon fall away in faith and piety, ending, perhaps, in betrayal or denial. Peter's fall teaches the necessity of never losing sight of our divine Master, of ever keeping in close touch with Him, cost it what it may.

It is worthy of note, too, that Peter persisted in exposing himself to the danger of sin. Aware of his own moral weakness, feeling lack of courage and fear of the scoffer and the scorner, he mingles rashly among his Master's enemies—nay, in manner and conversation, outwardly at least, becomes one of them. Bad company is the worst of all possible occasions of sin. The strongest go down be-

fore it. What of those that are at once weak and rash? Two points are clear in this matter: God will not help souls wilfully exposing themselves to needless danger; and next, that most souls are *spiritually* too weak to help themselves; for it is ever true that "He who loveth the danger shall perish therein."

III. But though Peter fell, and fell basely, he repented quickly and sincerely. Grace found a ready entrance into his heart. There is thus a consoling side to the picture presented to-day. The look the Master cast upon him, so sad, so reproachful, was not lost on Peter. What shame it aroused, what recollections it brought to mind, what floods of repentant tears he shed, as he thought of his treachery to a Master, so kind, so true and so tender! The heinousness of his crime, for he sinned against the light, broke in upon his soul in all its hideous reality. The veil that darkened his vision was torn aside, and he judged himself, as he was, "a sinful man." His repentance was no passing sentiment, but a deep and lasting awakening of conscience to the hatefulness of sin, and lifelong sorrow for incurring it. As I said, his cheeks were furrowed during life with the tears shed in atonement for it.

God, we know, took away his sin. He was pardoned and restored to grace. The illustrious penitent, type of true compunction for all time, became his Lord's first vicar, the keystone of the world-encompassing arch, the foundation stone on which alone united Christendom can rest. The promise made to Peter still lives; and out of his boat, the Roman Church, the new ark of Noe, Christ still teaches "the multitude on the shore."

The shameful crucifixion was over, and the glorious resurrection had become a fact in history. Peter had again resumed his humble occupation of fishing. On one occasion he and his companions "had spent all the night and caught nothing." A stranger appeared who told them to cast the net on the right side of the ship, and forthwith "it was filled to breaking." Over a fire of coals an humble meal is prepared, and they all recognize in the stranger their risen Lord. It was then that, standing near a fire such as had flickered in the court of the denial, that Our Lord in His risen majesty evoked the triple confession of faith and love, that blotted out the triple denial of the Passion, "Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" And Peter, no longer boastful and self-confident, appeals humbly to Our Lord's intimate knowledge of his heart, "Thou knowest, O Lord, that I love thee." Thrice was the question put and answered; and his-

tory tells how faithful Peter, *personally* and in *his successors*, has been to the injunction of his Master.

Two monuments attest in Rome to-day how Peter witnessed to his Lord, even to the shedding of blood. Both deeply impress the visitor, but very differently. One is an humble wayside chapel, standing lone, solitary and abandoned, like Christ in His Passion, and marking the spot where St. Peter, flying from Rome, at the request of the faithful in Nero's time, met Our Lord bearing His Cross. The chapel is named "Domine quo vadis," from St. Peter's words on the occasion, "Lord, whither goest thou?" "To Rome, to be crucified," was the reply. Taking the words to heart, the Apostle hurried back to shed his blood for Christ. The other monument is the noble and lordly pile of St. Peter's Church, on the Vatican Mount, where Peter's crucifixion took place, and wherein the penitent Apostle undid by his great *affirmation* at Rome his base *denial* at Jerusalem.

Surely the "finger of God is here, and it is wonderful in our eyes." The risen Christ has made the risen Apostle the foundation stone of His kingdom. Rome, that hammered the nations into unity, by *law and force*, paved the way for the new Rome, that binds all nations into unity by *faith and love*. Peter chose it as the center of "the kingdom," and "being confirmed, now confirmeth his brethren," and ever will, till "Christ's own" are gathered in and Rome is replaced by the "Jerusalem that is above."

*Conclusion.*—Two things strike us in this phase of the sacred Passion—the mercy and grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and next, the speedy and earnest repentance of Peter. Well might David, himself a penitent, cry out, "The mercies of God I shall sing forever." "His mercy is above all his works." This mercy tracked Peter down in his sin till he "returned to his father's house." On Peter's part there was little or no delay. There was no tampering with grace. Ere the morning sun rose in the sky he was back again into favor with God. There was no halting between God and Baal. His earnestness was shown by his life-long compunction and perseverance.

We have dwelt long and minutely on the fall and repentance of Peter, but let us turn our eyes to our own souls. Let us ask ourselves two questions: Have we ever, like Peter, basely denied Christ, and, if so, have we followed him in his repentance? Remember, we have clearer light and quite as much grace, if not far

more, than the Apostles ere the descent of the Holy Ghost. The greater the light the greater the responsibility. The higher the sun in the sky the less the excuse for falling over precipices.

Let us ask ourselves if there is not a great deal of cant in our condemnation of Peter. Have we never denied or done something tantamount to it? Have we never been ashamed of Jesus, and of His cause? Have we not listened to or taken part with those who jeered, and scoffed, and ridiculed Him in His Church and her ministers? When He is daily bound, and tried, and judged by His enemies, the world and the flesh, whose side do we take? Even when not going so far as to join the Pharisees and Sadducees of the day, when still calling ourselves by His name and professing His doctrine, do we not follow Him "*afar off*"? While Jesus stands cold, lonely, hungry and naked in our poorer brethren, do we not sit "warming ourselves," thus practising the gospel of ease and self-indulgence, while professing "to take up our cross daily and follow him."

Again, while falling like Peter, have we risen with him? Do we never hear the cock crow to awaken us from the sleep-like death of sin? Are we not deaf, wilfully deaf, to the call of conscience and the warning looks of Christ? He is ever near us in the Church. Do we respond to His calls and looks?

If we have fallen with Peter—and who has not?—let us weep, repent, change with him, and not by persistence in sin "crucify again and again the Lord of Glory."

## IV. CHRIST BEFORE HEROD

"And Herod with his army set him at nought: and mocked him."—  
Luke xxiii, II.

*SYNOPSIS.—Introduction.—Five times did Christ stand in the guise of a guilty criminal before His creatures. His appearance before Herod our theme to-day. Pilate, anxious to transfer responsibility of condemning an innocent man to another, sent Our Lord for trial to Herod, tetrarch, under Rome, of the province from which Our Lord came, then in Jerusalem to keep the Passover.*

*I. Story of the Herods. Closely connected with Our Lord's life and works. A family of successful adventurers. The Herod of the Passion, called Antipas, son of Herod the Great; called the fox by Our Lord. His sins of adultery and incest denounced by John the Baptist, foully murdered by him at the instigation of the wicked woman with whom he lived. To him was Christ brought for trial. Anxious to see and converse with Our Lord. Christ silent. Awful judgment of Herod implied herein.*

*II. Why? No worthy motive behind Herod's curiosity. Herod type of impure worldlings. God speaks not to such. Silence of God in a soul worst form of punishment. The Herods of the day.*

*III. Herod's last and greatest sin, mockery of Christ. The depth of mental torture to Christ, Eternal Wisdom, in being treated as a fool. The mystery it contains. The folly of the Cross. The opposition of the world to the wisdom of Christ. Reason in the higher realms of thought needs light of faith. Herod's sad end. The two lessons taught by his life.*

When Our Lord looked with eyes of tenderness and pity on Simon Peter, it was nearly dawn, on the first Good Friday. He had still to stand His trial before Caiphas, and the full court of the Sanhedrim, that could not meet to hear cases till daytime. The mockery of this trial is soon over, and Christ, laden with chains, is dragged before the Roman governor, Pilate, to have sentence of death pronounced, as to him the infliction of this penalty was reserved. A hollow charge of blasphemy and sedition, got up against Him by illegal questioning and false accusations, had been framed by the Sanhedrim; and they now seek the sanction of the Roman authorities to put Christ to death. Pilate, the governor, had come to Jerusalem from Cesarea, with an additional cohort of soldiers, the better to overawe the turbulent Jews, during the Passover feast.

Herod, too, tetrarch or kinglet, under Rome, ruling over Galilee and Perea, was in Jerusalem at the time, partly to comply with the Paschal precept, inasmuch as in religion he was a Jew; but mainly,

perhaps, to take a share in the amusements and license then prevalent in the city. His share in Our Lord's Passion, as well as Our Lord's bearing toward him, form the theme of our discourse to-day.

I. A footsore and weary prisoner, worn out with the ill-treatment of the night—already almost reduced to the level of "a worm and no man," to use the prophet's graphic description, He is led away again from the house of Pilate, where His trial began, to the house of Herod. Our Lord was a Galilean, as were most of His followers, and this circumstance gave Pilate an opportunity of casting the responsibility of passing sentence on Him on Herod. It is with this Herod, a puppet of Rome and one of the chief actors in Our Lord's passion, that we have now to deal.

No small measure of Our Lord's sufferings sprang from His being brought into close contact with the wretched creatures who compassed His death. For a refined, cultured, sensitive mind, association with the low, the ignorant, the coarse, and the sordid is martyrdom. To the holy and God-fearing, sin and the godless are a source of acute pain. What then must Our Lord, infinite holiness, justice and truth, have felt when brought a victim into "the council of evildoers"? How revolting and loathsome to Him was the foul touch, and breath, and speech, and conduct of the rabble of Jews and their leaders, to say nothing of the Gentile soldiers.

Pilate, to whom He was first led, saw through the flimsy veil of accusation woven against Him in the council chamber of the high priest; but he had not the courage of his opinions. He was glad of the excuse, therefore, to send Him for trial to Herod, on hearing that He was a Galilean, and as such, under Herod's jurisdiction. It was thus that Herod became an actor in the Passion. Indeed, there is an intimate connection between him and Our Lord's mission and life. The Scripture says that Herod, seeing Jesus, was very glad, for "he had heard many things concerning him," "Herod, the tetrarch, heard of all things that were done by him" (Luke ix). The great prophet and teacher of the land over which he ruled could not have escaped his notice. There were disciples of Our Lord in his own household—amongst others, Joanna the wife of his steward, Chausai. Some time after the murder of John the Baptist, moved by superstitious fear, and a bad conscience, Herod said of Our Lord, "This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead" (Matt. xiv). "And he sought to see him" (Luke x). His wish is now unexpectedly gratified. Not that he wished to satisfy his

curiosity through any praiseworthy or unselfish motive. It was not to free an innocent victim of perverted justice nor to learn the ways of the Lord from his accredited teacher; but to amuse himself with a display of strange, magical power; or even a wonderful cure—that perhaps of his now crippled step-daughter, Salome, the dancing girl, whose request had caused him to order the beheading of John the Baptist. Herod has gained the odious double distinction of having mocked Christ, and of having murdered His precursor.

He came of a bad stock—an Idumean family that had adopted the religion of the Jews and the politics of Rome, a type of the true Eastern adventurer, able, cruel, crafty and licentious; utterly devoid of conscience where their temporal interests were at stake. As very often happens, they were successful and prosperous; and yet at heart miserable and unhappy, an object lesson in illustration of the truth that even in this world wealth, place and power are not everything, and that they often hinder, rather than promote, true joy, peace and content.

The Herod of the Passion, known as Herod Antipas, was the son of Herod the Great, founder of the family, who had married Mariamne, the last of the Machabeans, whom he afterward foully murdered. He was an imperialist—a partisan of the Romans, and formed in the state a political party called Herodians, aiming at eventual kingship. He beautified and enlarged both Temple and city, in Roman fashion. Herod Antipas was, like his father, cruel, crafty and licentious; but without his father's ability and force of character. He was called *fox* by Our Lord. He intrigued with a woman of loose life, his brother's wife, and to marry her he illegally divorced his own lawful spouse. His new partner in guilt led him into the most revolting crimes. Their openly scandalous union was publicly denounced by the Baptist, Christ's precursor. "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." Herod dared not publicly slay the last of the prophets, and instead cast him into prison. But one act of injustice leads to another. To fulfil a wicked oath, made to a vicious maiden, urged thereto by her mother, his partner in guilt, Herod orders the Baptist to be beheaded.

In spite of his gross cruelty and lust, Herod had a sort of veneration, or rather fascination, for religious rites and ceremonies, and never failed to make a show of attendance at them. Like all good instincts gone wrong, the husk and chaff remained when the grain

and kernel of religion had gone. He was the type of many a royal and imperial persecutor in ancient and modern times. If true religion does not suit them, they frame one to "their own image and likeness." Flattering tools are ever at hand to help the great and powerful in this sort of unholy work. But neither Christ nor the Baptist feared or flattered Herod. Hence their treatment by him, and his own undoing. Well for him had he taken to heart the Psalmist's words: "The just man shall correct me in mercy, and shall reprove me, but let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head" (Ps. cxl, 5). His courtiers persuaded him that the keeping of the Passover made him religious. He clung to the ritual and ceremonies of religion, whilst casting the moral law to the winds. He was punctual to the letter, whilst thwarting the spirit, of the law. Like the other enemies of Christ, who were now plotting His judicial murder, Herod "gave tithe of mint and cummin," to the utter neglect of the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, purity and truth.

And now the opportunity that Herod long craved for came round. Christ is actually sent to him for trial. This gracious act on the part of the Roman governor gratifies his pride, and heals a mutual feud of long standing. His curiosity to see and hear Christ is great. We have every reason to think that Herod was kind and complimentary, flattering even, in his reception of Christ. "He questioned him in many words; but he answered him nothing." This silence of Christ before Herod, like the dread silence of God in souls lost to a sense of sin, was more eloquent than words. He answered Pilate, He had something to say even to the hypocritical high priest; but for Herod, not a single word, though he spoke fairly, nay unctuously. And why? Because Herod's heart was hardened, and his mind clouded by the most God-expelling of all vices—lust. It was his predominant passion. His murders and cruelty were but its consequences. When long indulged in, more than any other sin, it "divides between God and the soul." To draw near to God in prayer, to offer incense, to join in church services, when the soul is wallowing in sin—particularly sins of the flesh that a man will not give up—is adding hypocrisy to guilt. "When you multiply prayers I will not hear, for your hands are full of blood" (Isaias i, 15). Repentance for wilful sin, deep, true, and sincere, is the first essential condition for admittance into favor in God's sight. "Wash yourselves, be clean, cease to do per-

versely, and then come and accuse me." "If your sins be red as scarlet they shall be made whiter than snow" (Id. v, 18).

Now this is just what Herod would not do. He clung to the fiendish woman who had marred his life and her own. At her request he had slain the innocent Baptist, next to Christ Himself amongst men in holiness of life; and the blood of this "just Abel" was crying to heaven for vengeance. In vain does the impenitent sinner speak honeyed words to the Son of God. How terrible is the silence of God to a soul irrevocably "inclined to evil." "Chastise me not in thy wrath, O Lord: be not thou *silent*." Woe to the sinner who feels not the grace of repentance stirring in his heart, whose conscience hears not the warning voice of God. The last rattle even in the throat of the dying is an indication of life; but unbroken silence is the seal and symbol of death. Herod would not take God's grace when offered; and God will not change His laws to suit Herod's whims. He is still and calm as the silent grave.

II. As I said, no worthy motive was behind Herod's desire to see and hear Christ. Our Lord invites all, even the "worst sinners to repentance." "He even stands at the door of their heart and knocks," and gladly welcomes "all who seek him *in truth*"; but herein Herod failed. He wished to see and hear wonders from Christ, as rustics go to mock and gape at jugglers in a fair. There was no desire to approach Christ "in spirit and truth" by ceasing "to do evil and learning to do well." Hence, no miracle is wrought, no word either of comfort, exhortation, or reproof is uttered. Dead silence marks Christ's dealings with Herod.

Herod was the type of the worldling of his day. Herods abound and ever have abounded—men weak, absurdly vain, sensual, frivolous, and yet often wonder loving and clinging to the rags of religion under the form of some favorite superstition or other. In views, they may be advanced Modernists, who, like Herod, see Him only to mock the reality of His person and mission; but their advanced religion is but a deadly superstition withal.

To humble souls, who seek God in sincerity and truth, Jesus ever speaks. Such as these He is ever ready to heal, enlighten and console; but the proud He sends "empty away." As in the days of His earthly pilgrimage, to the gaping crowd, who observe Him only to carp and criticize, who ask questions merely to entrap or "ensnare him in speech," who seek for signs and wonders, only to

gratify curiosity, no sign is shown—to them Jesus is silent. The blind see, the deaf hear, the dead in sin rise again, the poor have the gospel preached to them; but the Herods of the day He passes by. They see only a Galilean peasant—a Jewish rabbi, the son of Joseph and Mary; but the Son of God they see not.

In all souls, in or out of the body of the Church, wherein there is a festering habit of sin which they do not seriously mean to renounce, Jesus is silent. His words would be wasted on them. They would take no effect. Such as are in this frame of mind are hopelessly godless, and to the utterly godless, Christ is ever silent. The Baptist's furrow has not been traced in their souls. He sent His herald to prepare His way. John's sole and whole message was, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." The method is still the same. The heart must be plowed by grief for sin ere the seed of God's grace can germinate. Herod slew the Baptist. The modern Herod—the world, the embodiment of Herod—would slay God's heralds also, the voice of conscience and the voice of the Church, if they durst, and could. God's revenge is silence. His worst punishment on this side the grave is: "You will call upon me and I will not hear; and you will die in your sins."

III. And now came Herod's greatest sin; his mockery of Jesus. He mocked his God. He clad Eternal Wisdom, incarnate in Christ, in the robe of a fool. It was his chief share in the Passion, and gives him a principal place amongst the actors in the drama of the Cross. Though he did not imbue his hands directly in Christ's blood, as in the slaying of the Baptist, nor was he aware of Christ's divinity, yet was he guilty of the death of the Lord indirectly and negatively by not liberating Him when it was his duty and in his power to do so. Herod and his jeering myrmidons clad their silent prisoner in a white robe of scorn, to show their contempt of Him as a witless fool—a man bereft of common sense and intelligence. The tetrarch, irritated at Our Lord's persistent silence, puts on Him the distinguishing mark of those who in losing their reason lose their humanity.

Now if there is any one form of trial more than another that men necessarily conscious of their superiority to others wince under, and shrink from, it is ridicule, the being deemed stupid and ignorant. They will endure any physical torment rather than be, as Christ was in the most humiliating degree, "the scorn of men

and the outcast of the people." Picture to yourselves Eternal Wisdom, who planned the world—of whose infinite intelligence the combined wisdom of men and angels is but a faint and distant shadow—and even putting aside the truth of His Divinity, think of Him who composed the Our Father, who uttered the maxims stored in the Sermon on the Mount, and the discourse of the Last Supper—think of Him treated as a fool—turned out into the streets in the garb of an idiot. The highest created intelligences stood in mute adoration before Him as the giver of their powers; the holiest and wisest of our race are ever finding new treasures of wisdom in the few sayings and maxims He left behind Him in the Gospel, and yet He is presented by Herod as a laughing-stock to a coarse, besotted rabble. The very sick He healed, the deaf whose ears He unstopped, the blind to whom His word restored the light of day, the cripples who "rose up and walked" at His command; nay, His own chosen Apostles, are hiding out of sight, ashamed to be seen near Him. The very children He loved are encouraged to cast stones and ordure at the poor fool of Galilee, as He wearily tramped along the rough, hard streets, back again to Pilate.

There is a deep mystery in this imputing folly, madness, to the Son of God. We shudder at the bodily torments of the Passion, and the thought of the scourge, the thorns, the cross and the cruel nails; and it seems incredible God could have "so loved the world as to give his own beloved son over to them"; but the shame, the degradation to which the "Light of lights," Eternal Wisdom, the world's true light, of which both faith and reason combined are but rays, was subjected to are worse.

As I said, Herod is the embodiment of the spirit of the world, and the flesh kindred, nay, almost twin spirits. His deeming Our Lord mad and mocking Him as such shows the gulf that existed between the spirit of Christ and that of Herod. "The carnal man," *i. e.*, the world and the flesh, "understandeth not the things that are of God." The wisdom of the Cross is folly to the Gentiles; that God, clad in human form, should become an object of laughter and scorn to His creatures shows how far the world had drifted from the divine standard.

But is the world, in spirit, much better to-day? Outwardly, no doubt, it *is* better. Christ has overcome it, and His Cross has toned, elevated and renewed all things; but inwardly, and in spirit, it *is* as hostile to Him and as bad as ever. Worldlings would go as

far as Herod, if they dared. The world, their master, is in heart as lecherous, as incredulous, as selfish as ever. Men are what they are in God's sight, *i. e.*, what they *think* and *will*; and we all know what the minds and hearts of the votaries of the world and the flesh are like. To "men of the world" Christ is certainly not "the way, the truth and the light." The wisdom of the Cross ever is and ever will be foolishness to the Greek, *i. e.*, to the worldly wise. "They mocked him, clothing him with a white garment," expresses the attitude of the world to Christ in His Church to-day. Scorn and derision greet the invitation of Our Lord's vicar to a world "wise in its own conceits," when inviting it to return to the ways of righteousness and truth. Even in the realms of reason and higher thought the world is ever "digging pits that hold not water," extinguishing reality and common sense; yet hisses out invectives against those to whom the light of faith points a better way, and who would fain be "a light to their feet and a guide to their paths."

But to return to Our Lord and His persecutors. He passes in His robe of scorn from the palace of Herod back again to Pilate. Herod has now rejected forever "the day of his visitation." The silence of Jesus both to ear and heart remains unbroken. No record tells of Herod's ever repenting of his crimes. In exile and infamy his sinful career was brought to an end.

Urged by his partner, Herodias, he went with her to Rome to sue from the emperor the full title of king; but the report of his misdeeds had gone before him, and fortune, the only divinity he really worshiped, mocked him who had dared to mock God. Deprived of his office, even of tetrarch, he was banished to Gaul, where he ended his days in misery. The world is but a poor paymaster at best, and even in this life deludes rather than rewards its votaries. It tempts us into piling up heavy debts, and leaves us morally and spiritually bankrupt.

Two lessons are suggested by the phase of the Passion treated of to-day. The first is summed up in St. Paul's words, "I beseech you, brethren, not to receive the grace of God in vain," and is illustrated in Herod's life. Stifle it not as he did by a life of worldliness, sensuality and irreligion. God sent him, as He sends us all, *sufficient*, if not *abundant*, grace. He had his lights and calls; and both *could* and *ought* to have lived up to them. God spoke to him in conscience. He spoke to him through John the Baptist, and the

preaching of Our Lord. But Herod went his own way. Like Pharaoh, he hardened his heart. The voice of God was drowned by the voice of the world and the flesh, till it ceased and was heard no more.

The next lesson, and a consequence of the preceding, is contained in those other words of St. Paul, "God forbid I should glory save in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ." It is no desire to see us suffer, that Our Lord tells us to renounce a life of pleasure and take up our cross. It is His inherent love of us and interest in our welfare that urges Him to make us tread the path He chose Himself. Herod's life of pleasure ended in disappointment and misery. Christ's Passion was brief and led to the glories of the Resurrection and joy without end. So with us. The sufferings of this life are not to be compared with the joys that await those who take up their cross daily and follow Our Lord, and who under its weight both feel and say with their Leader, "Not my will but thine be done."

## V. CHRIST BEFORE PILATE

“But they were instant, with loud voices requiring that he might be crucified. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.”—Luke xxiii, 23, 24.

*SYNOPSIS.—Introduction.—Of the actors in the tragedy of the Crucifixion the names of Judas and Pilate best known. Why? Pilate guilty of judicial murder of Christ, whom he could and ought to have saved. The scourging and crowning with thorns due to his direct action.*

*I. Our Lord's return from Herod. Pilate convinced of Christ's innocence and declares it. His dealings with the Jews. Deservedly unpopular and hated. His character. Weakness in all that involved sacrifice of self. “An enemy of the Cross.” His last chance. “Weighed in the balance and found wanting.”*

*II. Pilate orders Our Lord to be scourged. One of the most terrible and humiliating torments of the Passion. Savagely and recklessly carried out. No limit to number of stripes in Roman law, though there was in Jewish. Free hand given herein to Roman soldiers.*

*III. The crowning with thorns. The pain involved. What it typified. Pilate's guilty weakness. What it brought him to. He feared Caesar more than God. Looked only at this life. Never thought of another. Life of Christ reproduced in Church.*

*Conclusion.—Exhort to be spiritually strong and to fear only God; and the reproach of one's own conscience.*

Amongst those who took a direct part in Our Lord's Passion, two names stand out prominently in the Gospel—Judas Iscariot and Pontius Pilate. The former betrayed, the latter condemned to death, the Lord of glory. Christ Himself prophesied this double event. “One of you,” alluding to Judas, “will betray me,” and, referring to Pilate and the Romans, “The Son of Man shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked and scourged and spat upon” (Luke xviii). Then, Jew and Gentile, East and West, took part in the great crimes enacted on the first Good Friday in Jerusalem.

Though Pilate would fain have washed his hands of the blood of that “just man,” yet, by common consent, his conscience was weighted with the guilt of condemning One whom he knew and declared to be innocent. Water may cleanse the body, but repentance and reparation of the wrong done can alone remove stains from the soul. As long as the creed lives on human lips, so long will the name of Pontius Pilate be held in execration; for therein it is recorded that through his judicial sanction the Pas-

sion took place. "Suffered under Pontius Pilate." A display of the firmness from which no judge, and especially a judge like Pilate, with an armed force at his back, is justified in shrinking, would have quelled the frenzied mob that shrieked for the blood of "the lamb of God." But Pilate vacillated, dallied with a self-evident duty, claiming fulfilment, and fell. Justice prevaricated, and mob rule carried the day. Over and beyond the gross miscarriage of justice, two of the sorrowful mysteries of the Passion, the scourging and crowning with thorns, were due to his direct action. In this degenerate Roman judge, weakness and cruelty replaced the national justice and strength of his race.

I. We left Our Lord in the garb of a fool, weary and foot-sore, wending his way back again, from the house of Herod, to the hall of Pilate, for His final trial, the fifth He was to undergo before men. A few days before, Pilate and his court must have been startled by the shouts of, "Hosanna to the Son of David," greeting the entry into the city of a meek and lowly stranger, who had ridden over the slopes of Olivet. The object of that ovation is now dragged before him, a second time, for judgment. He had previously, as a trained judge, read innocence in the very gait and countenance of Christ; and to rid himself of responsibility, had sent him to Herod. The prisoner now returns, still uncondemned. To the bold effrontery of his accusers, who would fain bluff Pilate into a hasty sentence, the judge replies, "Behold, I having examined him before you, find no cause in this man in those things wherein you accuse him. No, nor Herod, either. For I sent you to him, and behold nothing worthy of death is done to him" (Luke xxiii, 15). "Take ye him and judge him according to your law," he had said, to throw the guilt of condemnation on others; but, retort the enemies of Jesus, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." Christ's trial now begins in grim earnest; and we may add, Pilate's, too. Will he be strong enough, and just enough to decide fairly, and act up to his conscience throughout? From the very beginning, he seems to have had an irresistible conviction of the prisoner's innocence, and a desire to save him, which all the cunning devices and sophistry of the Jews failed to shake. He knew the temper of the Jews and their leaders well. There was no love lost between them. He feared that their evil reports about him might reach his imperial master in Rome. They abhorred him in turn;

and it must be owned that his rule, as Procurator, had been harsh and untactful. To Jewish fanaticism and deep religious scrupulosity he ever opposed Roman insolence and impiety. They deeply resented his bringing his army from Cesarea to Jerusalem and thus flaunting the standards of pagan Rome, introducing at the same time pagan rites and emblems into the holy city. He, on his part, indifferent to religion, in any shape or form, could not understand their bigotry; and solely on compulsion did he remove the hated standards. A cohort only was quartered on certain festivals, in order to overawe the mob. Pilate had, moreover, given deep offense, by applying the money of the Temple treasury—the sacred corban—to the profane purpose of constructing an aqueduct. This caused tumult and uproar, resulting in massacre. We learn from the Scriptures that on one occasion he slew some Galileans worshiping in the Temple, mingling their blood with that of the sacrifices. He loathed the tenacity with which the Jews clung to their religion and nationality; he entertained, in short, all the hatred and contempt which oppressors ever have for the victims of their oppression. His insolent display of Roman superiority roused the Jews to frenzy, themselves proud in their turn of their ancient lineage; and looking forward to worldwide dominion under a triumphant Messiah—a sort of Jewish Mahomet, whose kingdom should be of this world, whatsoever its relation to the next. For a Messiah, “meek and humble of heart,” they had neither respect nor love. With such accusers, and before such a judge, the gentle Saviour was brought for trial. Pilate, as he sat on the judgment seat, raised on the marble pavement, called in Hebrew “Gabbatha,” was angry at his recall to business, and anxious to get rid of trouble. Though he could be, and was, stern and cruel at times, yet was he, at bottom, weak and irresolute—deadly failings in a ruler of men. He was selfish, and consequently untrue and unfaithful. He thought only of his own personal aggrandizement, heedless of the means that led to it. The shifting motives of the hour, rather than fixed principles, guided his conduct and decisions. Nor was he without an element of good. Though in the long run “Their voices prevailed,” and he “did as they required,” and “Jesus he delivered up to their will” (Luke xxiii, 23-24); still, his desire was ever to “release Jesus.” Three distinct times did he declare Christ’s innocence of the charges of conspiracy, sedition and treason,

brought against him; but he would make no personal sacrifice in support of what he saw to be right. Release ought to have followed his declaration of Christ's freedom from guilt; but he faltered and failed. "He followed not justice, but iniquity"; and he "gave sentence that it should be as they required" (Luke xxiii, 24).

Pilate had often sat in the seat of judgment, and in many cases, doubtless, had decided lightly, hastily, cruelly, but never so unjustly as now. Never had he felt the sting of conscience so sharp, the innocence of the prisoner so manifest. It was in vain he went through the theatrical farce of washing his hands. Moral guilt is not removed by water. It is dangerous to tamper with the convictions of conscience. Duty, when plain, demands instant compliance. The right thing must be done, cost what it may. But Pilate, like so many others *before* and *since* his day, was a moral coward. He dared not do what he knew and felt to be right. His hand-washing did but add hypocrisy to guilt. The blood of the innocent ever calls aloud for vengeance.

Meanwhile, what of Jesus? He, the Saviour of the world, stands before His own creatures, as the sheep before its shearers, and butchers. He saw the struggle going on in Pilate's heart: for Pilate, too, as I observed, was on his trial before Jesus. It was his last grace, perchance. Divine light and help to know and do the right thing were not wanting. His own vacillating will was at fault. A warning message from his wife implored him to "have nothing to do with this just man"; but he still hesitates and temporizes. The cry, "If thou releasest this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend," rang in his ears. It was self-interest against the claims of duty—Cæsar against God. He still clings, however, to the hope of saving Jesus by compromise. It was the custom to release a criminal at the Paschal feast, and thinking they would prefer the prophet before whom they had strewn palm branches a few days before, tries to persuade them to free Jesus, and crucify Barabbas, the notorious thief and highwayman. Grace was no doubt working in Pilate's heart; for where Christ is, "Virtue goeth forth from him." Pilate is plainly overawed by this wonderful Jewish prophet. His wife's dream, ancient beliefs, containing scattered rays of primitive light as to the gods appearing in certain favored places, and persons, were telling on him. He questioned Jesus, half in curiosity, half

in superstitious fear, as to his origin and mission; but the fear of Cæsar proved stronger in his case than the fear of God. Christ, too, was silent. He saw that Pilate was neither earnest nor sincere in following truth and justice. He gauged and measured Pilate's sin, as compared with that of Judas: "He that betrayed me to thee, hath the greater sin"; but sin it was—and grave, a sin against light, a gross breach of his duty, as judge and governor. His fate is a warning to those who are content to *will* what is right; but make no effort to *do* it. He *wished* to release Jesus; but no more. He proposes to free Him, instead of Barabbas; but, with all the might and majesty of the Roman Empire at his back, takes no effectual means to carry out his good resolution. "He released unto them him, who, for murder and sedition had been cast into prison; but Jesus he delivered up, to their will" (Luke xxiii, 25). It seems blasphemy to put the names of Jesus and Barabbas side by side—crime with holiness—a thief, a rebel and an assassin, with One against whom even His bitterest enemies could not find a word to say. The hoarse cry of "Away with him, crucify him," "Not this man but Barabbas," that broke loose from the throats of the mob, stuns and appalls us, as it did Pilate. It is almost a consolation to learn that "They knew not what they did," in the sense that we know now. And yet does not a similar cry rise from every Christian heart, that prefers vice to virtue, the will of the world and of the flesh, to that of the great and good God. Do we not all, at times, call out loudly, "Not this man, but Barabbas"?

II. But let us put aside for the moment our own share in the Passion of Christ to fix our attention on that of Pilate. Instead of turning his cohort loose on the rabble, unjustly clamoring for blood, as he had done before when it suited his purpose, he basely yields to the storm of popular clamor. He frees a seditious robber; and hands Jesus over to his brutal soldiery, to be scourged. "Then therefore Pilate took Jesus and scourged him." The Paschal lamb of the dying Passover was not flayed till dead; but Jesus Christ, by Pilate's orders, the true Paschal lamb of the new alliance, was flayed whilst alive. "We have thought him as it were a leper, and one stricken by God?"

By Jewish law, the stripes in scourging could not exceed forty, "Lest thy brother depart shamefully torn before thy eyes" (Deut. xxv); but the Roman law recognized no limit. The scourgers,

bribed by the Jews, wishing their victim to die under the lash, strove as to which amongst them could lay most stripes on Our Lord's already worn out and tortured body. On that body, fastened to a pillar, the horrible "*flagellum*," made up of several leathern thongs, with hooks of bone attached, rained on his quivering nerves. The scourging is one of the most terrible scenes of the Passion. The prophetic allusions to it in the Old Testament, and the revelations made to saints in subsequent times, make reflection on it painful. Hundreds of strokes fell upon Him as the cruel scourgers, prompted by the evil one, relieved each other. "The wicked have wrought upon my back," or, as St. Jerome translates it, have plowed a furrow on my back (Ps. cxxviii, 3). The cruel lash reaches every part of His sacred body. In the whole of His Sacred Passion, He is "Wounded for our iniquities;" but in the scourging, He suffers specially for sins of the flesh—the most blinding, the most opposed to the purity and holiness of God; and alas! the most numerous and widespread of all sins. "According to the measure of the sin shall the measure of the stripes be" (Deut. xxv, 2). "The whole head is sick, the whole heart is sad." "From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there is no soundness in him, wounds and bruises and swelling sores. They are not dressed nor bound up nor fomented with oil" (Isaias i, 6). The thorn crown pierces His head; and the cruel lash reaches every other part of His body. The prophet who glows in describing Him as "beautiful amongst the sons of men," elsewhere in sorrow, says of Him, "There is no beauty in him, nor comeliness, and his look was, as it were, hidden and despised. We have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted" (Isaias liii).

III. It was thus that, "Pilate took Jesus and scourged him." It is not Pilate's own judgment. "What evil hath this man done? I find no cause of death in him"; and then adds the unjust judge, "I will chastise him, therefore, and let him go." But Pilate's share in the Passion is not limited to the scourging; his soldiery interpret his words more widely. Unused to a victim, "In whose mouth there was no complaint," they invent a new torture, never inflicted before, or since. He is dragged to the guardroom, where the whole cohort are gathered. The robe, that had been hastily flung over his bleeding back, is torn off and an old purple ragged soldier's cloak is thrown over his shoulders.

A wisp of thorns, gathered from a neighboring bush, is woven into a garland, and beaten down savagely on his brow, with the reed, placed in his hand, in mockery of his kingly claims.

Adam's sin brought thorns into the world as a curse. In symbolism, sin is a thorn. Isaac, as victim, was saved by the ram entangled in a thicket of thorns. We, too, victims, doomed to punishment for our sins, escape through Him, the spotless lamb, whose Divine head was entangled in the thorny crown, woven by Pilate's soldiery. Victims of old were decked in roses; but the Victim of Sin was crowned with the thorns, that symbolize the sins for which He suffered. They were of Pilate's weaving. The law is bound to protect the remaining rights of its guilty victims; how much more those of the innocent victim of a miscarriage of justice.

Thus arrayed in a purple rag, and a thorny crown, the Lord of glory is exposed to the rude jests and cruel mockeries of a profligate soldiery. "Scandals must come" (in the course of things) "but wo to him, through whom they come." "Christ had to suffer"; all was foretold; but wo to those through whom these sufferings came about. To deck us with roses, He was crowned with thorns. To blunt the edge of every instrument of torture, He endured them all. It was not merely physical pain and torment He bore in silence, but what is harder, moral—he was the butt of jeers and scoffs, and insults innumerable. Prisoners are usually spared the mockery and gibes of their jailers; but Christ was clad as a buffoon for the sport of brutal Roman soldiers. Pilate has not thought of according Him the protection of the law. His minions kneel before their victim, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews." Little do they know the truth of their salutation. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra, this beautiful one in his robe? . . . Why then is thy apparel red, and thy garments like theirs that tread in the winepress?" (Isaias lxiii, 2). Pilate's wicked weakness reduced Christ to the condition of "a worm and no man"; but the day will come when "*this worm*," this embodiment of justice, will "trample on his enemies and tread them in his wrath, and their blood be sprinkled on his garments" (Ibid. 3).

Again, the Saviour, in ragged garb and with blood-stained countenance, is brought before this unjust steward of the authority

of God. Kings, conquerors and victims, used to be crowned; and so was Christ, the embodiment of all three, but in a crown of Pilate's weaving. The noble and patient bearing of the prisoner overawed his unjust judge. Pilate, whether in mockery or in pity, who can tell, making one last appeal for mercy and forbearance to the infuriated mob, cried out, as he presented Christ to the people, "Behold the man." Surely the spectacle of a prophet, once the darling of the nation, reduced to His now pitiable condition, will soften their hard hearts; but as well appeal to the wild waves in a storm, or a pack of hungry wolves in sight of prey, as to the sea of upturned faces that surged round his judgment seat. A fierce swelling cry, of "Crucify him, crucify him," arose. The passions of the mob were thoroughly roused; and Pilate stood powerless and irresolute. He had let go the helm of justice. He was a cork on the billows, a "reed shaken by the wind." Even in this extremity it was his duty to be just, to resist iniquity and injustice, even to the shedding of blood. But Pilate would be no martyr to righteousness. He never meant to suffer, in person, for any abstract principle of justice. Self-interest was his moving power. To be well with Cæsar, to hold his office as long as it suited him, was his main object. The Jews know this and cry out, "If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend." To be accused of official neglect and rapacity, to be called to account by his imperial master meant for him disgrace, poverty, possibly a cruel death. The commands of conscience are as imperious as those of Cæsar. Pilate argued, hesitated and, in the spiritual realm, fell. He kept his place, and power, and ill-gotten wealth; but stained his soul in doing so. He lost peace of mind. He inflicted a wound on his own conscience that all the waters of the Jordan or the Tiber could neither heal nor cleanse. He condemned the Lord of glory; and if ignorant of His person, he knew full well he was condemning an innocent man. "Then therefore he delivered him to them to be crucified" (John xix, 6). These words seal the fate of Christ, and doom of Pilate. Christ's body is in the hands of the Jews; but the unjust judge is in the hands of God. One of the many lessons suggested by this phase of the Passion is not to fear Cæsar, not to fear those "who can do no more than slay the body; but rather to fear God, who can cast both body and

soul into hell." If only Pilate, as far as his lights went, had taken this lesson to heart!

It is said that in a happy union husband and wife fuse into the likeness of each other. How truly is the life of Christ reproduced in that of His spouse, the Church. She, too, like her Lord, has her life of shadows, mingled with glimpses of glory, as His was. Her triumphal entry into one nation or city is often followed by shouts of, "Away with her," crucify her, from throats whence once proceeded hosannas of welcome. The same charges of blasphemy, treason and sedition are brought against her. She makes herself out to be Divine, "she deludes the people, perverts the nation, conspires against the state, forbids to pay tribute to Cæsar, and those who take part with her can not be Cæsar's friends"; she claims kingly powers and prerogatives; and her presence and influence are opposed to the best interests of the state. Annas and Caiphas and Sanhedrims are not wanting to judge and condemn her. Pilates, too, there are, who whilst professing to "find no fault in her," owing to her power for good, yet hesitate not to scourge and crown her with thorns, rob her of her ensigns of royalty, and thus reduced, expose her to the contempt and ridicule of the Gentiles. Her history in many lands is a rehearsal of the trial of Christ. Pilate in his representatives, partly through weakness, partly through cruelty, "delivers her over to her enemies to be crucified."

Pilate's part in the Passion has many a lesson for us all. His main fault, the source of his fall in the great trial, was moral weakness, a deadly fault in a judge and ruler of men. Weakness seems no sin, yet it disposes to sin. It appears to be no more blamable in character than delicacy of health to the body, yet it may be the source of deliberate and reckless wickedness. Though Pilate honestly tried to save Christ in the beginning, yet in the end, as the scourging, the crowning with thorns, and mockery of the Saviour prove, he showed himself unjust, cruel, crafty and cowardly. Like all who prefer wealth and place and power to principle; who keep the world, not God, before their eyes, Pilate ended by perverting justice, ignoring rights, and surrendering all that it was his duty as a judge and governor to uphold. He is the type, for all time, of the weak, in all states of life, who are ever shirking their responsibilities; who, though not wishing to do wrong, yet fear to do right; who, though their hearts are

with Christ, yet shout with the mob for Barabbas. Half the crimes of history are due to the lack of firmness in rulers. It will not do to plead good will, and the dilemma to which circumstances reduce us. No hand-washing or protest of good intentions will blot out sin.

Pilate might, and indeed ought, to have died a martyr. Grace was not wanting. Its author stood ready to dispense it had Pilate willed to receive it; but Pilate, like so many others, preferred to risk his soul's life, rather than endanger that of the body. He chose "the life that now is, rather than that which is to come." And yet how the world deludes its votaries! Pilate clung to Cæsar and this world—yet did both play him false. The remnant of life granted him was far from happy. Ostracized by the world, banished by Cæsar to Gaul, he passed it in exile, poverty, and wretchedness; and is said to have taken it away by his own act. Thus ended the brief career of the unjust judge who handed over Jesus "to the will of the Jews."

All through life we, too, have a choice to make, between the world and God, between our body's peace and our soul's peace, between Barabbas and Jesus. We can not be neutral. By the very nature of things, we must be partisans. The cleavage is too deep. God and Baal are not to be reconciled.

But remember, that to decide for Christ and His Cross, in this life, requires above all things moral strength, spiritual courage. Weakness is a vice, well nigh a sin. Life is a combat, and the strong only win the day. The feeble are in the way—food for death.

Let us therefore resolve ever to be in *deed* what we are in conviction. We are not alone. Christ is with us. His Cross is our strength, our tree of life, by the fruits of which we live and grow strong in spirit.

We all, I am sure, *would* be His disciples. There is no other course left, then, but to take up our cross daily, and "follow Him."

## VI. THE CROSS-BEARING

“Bearing his own cross he went forth.”—John xix, 17.

*SYNOPSIS.—Introduction.—The Cross-bearing as pictured in fourth sorrowful mystery of the Rosary and stations, as well as the lessons it teaches, theme of our discourse to-day. The task of Simon of Cyrene to be ours in life.*

*I. Christ's fifth and last trial over, Pilate delivers Him up to the will of His enemies. He is mockingly called a King and as such He dies. His royalty, in highest sense of term, real and eternal. The procession to Calvary. Legal forms no guarantee of truth and justice. The meaning of death by crucifixion. Sidelights thrown on it from history. The Cross before and after Our Lord touched and carried it. What it was and what it is—His shame, our glory. The Way of the Cross. Its incidents and their meaning.*

*II. Christ alone and unaided till now. Bore unflinchingly the full brunt of the storm; but in bearing His Cross He staggers and falls. Would teach us need of sharing Cross with Him. Circumstances under which Simon of Cyrene took up the Cross. Did it under constraint; but found it light and easy. All have to carry their cross. None exempt. Christ, by contact with it, has lightened and sweetened the Cross. Even if constrained to bear the yoke, grace and good will make the burden easy. The daughters of Jerusalem. How we all find our counterpart in the actors of the Passion. New era opens with raising of standard of Cross. If we would have it a sign of promise and redemption, we must “take it up daily and follow our Lord.”*

The phase of Our Lord's Passion to which I propose drawing your attention this morning is put before us for meditation in the fourth sorrowful mystery of the Rosary. The Stations of the Cross that adorn the walls of most churches and chapels ever picture it vividly to eye and mind. The scene it recalls is that of Our Lord carrying His Cross to Mount Calvary. This path of sorrows, this “Way of the Cross,” was a sad and painful journey to Our Lord; but its every step, its every incident, is suggestive of lessons to help us in the way of life. As followers of Christ, we, too, have to take up our cross and tread the rough, hard way of sorrow. Christ meant more than a mere figure of speech when He said: “Amen, I say to you, unless a man take up his cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple.” We have all to climb Calvary on our way to Thabor and Olivet. The thought of Christ, “bearing his own Cross,” ever has been and ever will be a source of strength, encouragement and hope to weary saint and sinner alike. Many, alas, play the part of Judas, or Pilate, or Herod, in life. Be

it ours, on the contrary, to tread in the steps of the humble Cyrenæan, who, though constrained, yet helped the Lord Jesus to carry His Cross.

I. The fifth and concluding trial of Christ is over. Pilate's last act in the drama of the Cross is to hand Him to those who hungered for His blood—pithily expressed in the words of the Gospel, "Jesus he delivered up to their will" (Luke xxiii, 25). Having thus, as it were, thrown the lamb to the wolves, the unjust judge vacates his seat. Divine justice alone reigns now, for human justice has failed. Christ was ever a stranger to the houses of kings and governors. The one occasion on which He entered He now leaves bearing the marks of cruel buffetings, the welts of the scourge, a crown of thorns, and a white and purple rag of scorn and mockery. Yet He is the fountain of royalty and a King, in every true sense of the word, even though "His kingdom is not of this world."

The mock trappings of royalty the world gave Him, fit emblem of the world's gifts to the worshipers at its shrine, are torn off, and His own simple and seamless garment, woven by her who shared His griefs, is put on, and He is led forth to bear His Cross. The cross that faced Our Lord then was not that we see to-day raised above our heads as a symbol of victory and hope. It was no work of art, towering over temples and palaces, glittering in the crowns of kings, or shining starlike on the neck and breasts of beauty. No, it was a vile, accursed instrument of torture, associated with shame, crime and degradation. It was not a cross embowered in roses; but two coarse, rough beams, hastily jointed, knotty, hard, heavy and ugly. No free Roman could suffer by it whatsoever his crimes. Death on it was reserved for slaves and the dregs of a foreign populace. "Cursed truly," as the Scriptures put it, "was he that hung upon the tree." "Go, lictor; bind his hands, veil his face, and hang him on the tree of shame," was the legal formula of crucifixion amongst the Romans. The procession duly formed, starts on its weary round. A trumpeter goes first, to arrest attention, and keep streets clear. Members of the Sanhedrim were present to see the sentence for blasphemy duly carried out. A centurion, representing Pilate, and a band of soldiers also followed. In the popular excitement against Jesus, and in favor of the thieves, regarded as semi-political offenders, such a measure was deemed necessary to quell riot, should any such arise. This

deed of wrong was carried out in due form by process of law. It is a revolting fact that all martyrdoms have been inflicted by a parody of justice, for some legal offense. From the martyr on Calvary to the saintly heroines of Compiegne, all have found a Pilate and a Sanhedrim to declare them worthy of death.

On the shoulders of "the Man of Sorrows," already livid with "wounds, bruises and swelling sores," the Cross is laid. A sidelight is thrown on the cross-bearing by a Roman writer, speaking of the crucifixion of a slave, who thus writes: "He was dragged all over the main thoroughfares of the city. He was made to carry his own cross. His hands were bound to its arms, and the full weight of the rough cross was laid on his back and shoulders, raw and bleeding from the scourging he had received" (Dion Halicarnassus: *Antiq.* xii). Death by crucifixion was so terrible that we read of criminals longing for the approach of wolves and other wild animals to tear out their living entrails, and so hasten the death they craved for. See what it was for Our Lord to drink the bitter cup of the chalice of our sins, and die a cruel death on the tree of shame. Could such a symbol, we may ask, be glorified? Yes, for "God has chosen the weak things of this world to confound the strong." That emblem of infamy is now the mark of the elect of God. It is the ladder of heaven. By it the very outcasts of social life scale the skies. The giants of pagan myth are told of as piling mountain on mountain, to besiege and capture heaven; but thieves have done so on the tree of shame. It is Jacob's ladder. On it man ascends to heaven, and angels descend to earth. Amidst scoffs and jeers Christ went forth bearing it, as Noe of old carried the beams that built the ark to save humanity, drowned in the sea of God's wrath. It is the wood that Abraham piled on his son Isaac's shoulders to light the fire for the sacrifice of that son, which God demanded. A substitute was found for Isaac, but none for Christ, the sacred sheep, caught by His head in a thorny crown.

It is His throne. *Regnavit a ligno Deus*: Christ reigned from the wood. "The government is on his shoulders," sang Isaias of old. "Christ's Cross is the key of heaven, that openeth the door, which no man shutteth." "I will lay the key of the house of David on his shoulders" (Isai. xxiii).

For weal or woe in love or scorn, the eyes of the world are riveted on the Cross. It is as much a sign of God's love and anger as the rainbow in the sky. "If I be lifted up," says Christ, speaking of the

Cross, "I shall draw all things to myself." The eyes and hearts of God's holiest, purest, and, let me add, bravest, servants are ever directed to this sign of redemption. Even politically, it points to victory. All other symbols of dominion go down before it—the crescent, the dragon, the rising sun. Whatever is of good repute, whatever has promise, either of this life, or the life to come, proceeds directly or indirectly, from the Cross. "He that sat on the throne," *i. e.*, rested on the Cross, "hath said, Behold, I make all things new." Now what greater wonder than in the change wrought in the Cross He took upon His shoulders, and the idea of sacrifice, and self-abandonment, it implies.

But, what meant the Cross to Him, when He bore it, on the first Good Friday to Calvary? Its weight crushed Him, its hideous associations appalled Him. In the fierce glare of a hot Syrian sun, along the rough winding cobble paved streets of a city, all either steeply ascending or descending, He has to bear the rough hewn beams that composed it on His bleeding back and shoulders. In the narrow lanes, the mob push and trample one another to get near, and hiss into His ears their vile imprecations.

He is thus the scapegoat for our sins, going forth without the camp "bearing our reproach"—the innocent Abel going to the field to be slain by his brother Cain—Noe bearing the wood of the ark to save both clean and unclean—the meek and gentle Moses carrying the wood of the tree, to be cast into the bitter waters of life, in order to sweeten them.

Tradition has preserved many touching incidents of the way of sorrows—His meeting with His holy mother, whose heart was cleft with the sword of grief—unmoved and tearless, though deep as the sea, was her sorrow, whilst the daughters of Jerusalem wept and lamented aloud; the heroic charity of Veronica, wiping His face with a napkin, and His leaving His sacred image impressed thereon, as a mark of loving acknowledgment. Loving pens have woven all these touching circumstances into the fourteen stations that make up the touching and beautiful devotion of the Way of the Cross. I choose one, in which a humble peasant took the leading part. Up to the bearing of the Cross He "trode the winepress alone." He had gone through, in mind and body, more than enough to cause death. No moan or complaint or cry for help or soothing of pain escaped His lips. "They that were near me stood afar off." "I looked around, and there was no helper," He mournfully complains,

through the prophets. He stood alone, yet in the cross-bearing He staggered and fell; and needed the help of His creatures. The incidents of the Passion are not mere accidents. Each has its lesson. He would teach us the duty and necessity of sharing the burden of the cross with Christ in life's journey. All are called. None are exempt. On the way to Calvary it was Simon from Cyrene, in distant Africa, a member of the despised race of Ham, on whom this supreme honor was conferred.

True, he shrank from it naturally, and was compelled to carry it after Christ; but once he bent his back to the burden, he found it, as we all do, easy and light. The Roman authorities were free to press men and their cattle, during an emergency, into the service of the state. Hence their compelling Simon, not out of pity for the bearer of the Cross, but because they wished Him to survive, to die on it. Simon, probably, was carrying the wood for preparing the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb—strange coincidence, that the new high priest, carrying the wood, on which He should be immolated in the new sacrifice, met Simon, carrying wood for the typical sacrifice. He is forced to cast down his load—his own self-imposed burden, and take on his shoulders the Cross of Christ. There was a sacred magnetism in the touch of Jesus; and the loathed Cross was raised and carried easily by the strength of the virtue that went forth from Him, and healed all, even the “accursed tree” of the Cross.

What a strange procession wound its way to Calvary. The Roman representatives, the Jews, children of Shem and Asia, Simon the Black, a son of Ham, from the burning sands of Africa, all part of the living stream, trending forward to the sacred mound. Each race furnishes a convert to the new religion of the Cross. It is not the lofty, or learned, or proud, that are chosen, but the poor and the lowly. Neither Annas nor Caiphas, nor scribe nor Pharisee, was chosen from amongst the Jews; but the penitent thief. He was the only Jew found worthy that day to enter into the Kingdom. Grace was offered to Herod, and Pilate; but it was the brave centurion, presiding at the crucifixion, who alone of the sons of Japhet “returned that day to his house justified.” And so, a lowly African peasant was chosen to replace Christ in carrying His Cross. Our Lord bore up under scourge and thorn; but fell under the Cross, that we sinners might show our good will in coming to His aid. This is the import of St. Paul's words, “I fill up those things that are wanting to the sufferings of Christ in my flesh” (Coll. i).

The Cross of Christ is the magic word that sweetens the bitter waters of life. It is hard and repulsive to sight and touch; but as with Simon, who shrank from it, at first, it becomes "sweet when chosen, and light when lifted on the shoulders." Simon at first was under constraint. He was compelled to lay down his bundle of wood, and take up the Cross of Christ. So are we all constrained by the law of God to lay aside every weight, every sin, every worldly care that hinders us from bearing in the proper spirit the Cross of Christ. Simon shrank from contact with the Cross, just as the natural man, the worldly man, the sensual man, shrinks from pain, and penance, and aught else that shadows the Cross. For our soul's health, God our Master lays it on us all. He compels us as the rulers did Simon, to bear the "reproach of Christ." Bear the Cross we must, willingly or unwillingly, after Christ, or away from Him. According to the spirit in which it is borne, it will lead, either to darkness or light. It hardens or softens. It is a ladder by which we may climb, or from which we may fall. It will stay us up, or crush us under its weight.

Simon bears the Cross. The procession winds its way through the gate of judgment—leading to the place of execution. "For, as the bodies of the beasts, slain by high priests for sin offerings, were burnt outside the camp," "wherefore," says St. Paul, "Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people by his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. xiii). They skirt the city walls on their way to the rising hillock of Golgotha. Relieved of His Cross though still faint and weary, He utters a few words of warning pity to the sympathetic souls behind Him. "Daughters of Jerusalem," He said to the wailing and tenderhearted women close by, "weep not for me, but for yourselves, and for your children." Not that He rejects or fails to appreciate their sympathy—a very natural display of feeling, in the sufferings He was undergoing—but He would have them understand that there are deeper woes and evils than those springing from physical torture. The sufferings of the body pass, melt away, into rest or oblivion; but there are other evils that never pass away. The wounds of sin never heal. The shadow of wrongdoing ever darkens the restless conscience. The thorns in His head, from which the blood was streaming, should blossom in glory—the scars on His sacred person should heal and shine as the sun—His Cross should be the symbol of victory, and power; but incurable evils were lurking in Jerusalem; sin, too, maybe, was in their own

hearts. These were the evils they should grieve for. Let them weep for these evils, and not merely give vent to useless sorrow for a suffering fellow creature. Thus would they reap in joy, forgiveness of sin, and promise of life—the fruits of His Cross.

Calvary is soon reached. The way of sorrows ends in a cruel death; but is followed by a triumphant Resurrection. “Death is swallowed up in victory.” Men “shall now look on Him whom they have pierced.” The whole world is called to gaze on Christ and His Cross. Whether as a sign to be revered or contradicted, it is a sign that can not be ignored. Whether we explain the fact on natural or supernatural grounds, the Cross of Christ ever has drawn to itself the gaze of mankind. True, it is erected for the fall and resurrection of many. Types of all classes of men assisted at the closing scenes of the most holy life that ended on the Cross; but with very varying dispositions and results. In some one or other of the actors of the Passion each one may find his counterpart. One, alas! perhaps, like Judas, betrays his Master—sells his God—sinks deeper and deeper into crime, despairs, dies and “goes to his place.” Another, like Peter, denies Him, but repents and is restored to grace by sincere sorrow; some like Annas, seek to cover up their own wicked lives by affected horror of the political aims and actions of Christ, and the society He founded. Others, like Caiphas, would stop their ears at the blasphemy of His calling Himself Son of God, and Judge of the world to come. Herod and Pilate trifle with grace, and the warning voice of conscience. Others, like our lady and the saintly women, hear and see and “keep the Word of God in their hearts.”

All, saint and sinner alike, are constrained, as Simon of Cyrene, to carry the Cross. He submitted, though opposed to it at first, and was saved; others refuse, sink under it, and are lost. All are lovingly invited to take it up, and follow Christ willingly and cheerfully. All have to bear life’s burden—itsself a cross, why not then gladly and resignedly?

Judgment is but a searching inquiry as to how we have carried our cross. And that day of reckoning will come to all. The Cross has been dipped and sweetened in the fountains of the precious blood. Hence we are inexcusable if we carry it not aright. The death of Christ on the Cross is the opening of a new era. The synagogue is rejected and replaced by the Church. The seventy weeks of years of Daniel are closing in, and Christ should be slain,

and the people that denied Him should no longer be His (Daniel ix, 26). The old Jerusalem, the city of God, the city of perfect peace, the joy of all the earth, was doomed and replaced by the new.

The destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jewish people are but figures of the wrath of God, awaiting unrepentant sinners who reject and despise the Cross of Christ. "*O crux ave spes unica.*" One sole hope rests to us all in this Cross. Christ carried it in shame and sorrow, to Calvary, for our Redemption. But, one day He will reappear as Judge with His Cross borne before Him, in might, and power, and majesty. If we would have Him propitious and His Cross a sign, not of condemnation, but redemption, let us listen to His words now, and imprint them on our hearts: "Let us deny ourselves and take up our Cross daily and follow him."















