

McDonnell, Joseph  
— Scenes from...  
ADT 9246

# SCENES FROM THE PASSION

By REV. JOSEPH McDONNELL, S. I.



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY  
407 Bergen Street  
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Price, Five Cents



# SCENES FROM THE PASSION

BY REV. JOSEPH McDONNELL, S.J.



INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY  
407 Bergen Street  
Brooklyn, N. Y.

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

It is not the purpose of the following pages to give anything in the nature of a connected or consecutive narrative of the Sacred Passion of our Lord. Their object, as the title indicates, is merely to place before the reader some "Scenes from the Passion," which, especially during the holy season of Lent, may serve to arouse in the soul devout and sympathetic thoughts regarding this most touching and sacred subject—thoughts that, beyond all others, have a power to move the heart and fill it with a consciousness of Christ's unspeakable love for us and of our bounden duty to endeavor, on our own parts, to make some small return to Him of the love and service that on so many titles we owe Him.

It must be borne in mind that the Gospel, in conjunction with the genuine traditions recognized by the Church, affords the only authentic record of the Passion of Christ. Hence, in endeavoring to paint these "Scenes from the Passion" I have appealed as far as possible to the Gospel narrative. At the same time I have not hesitated to fill in the details of the picture from the writings of the Saints and from the revelations said to have been made to pious persons, such as Catherine Emmerich and St. Bridget. What I especially wish to impress upon the reader is this: that these details, unless in so far as they are confirmed by the Gospel or tradition, however conducive they may be to pious meditation, are at best deserving only of the credence given *upon merely human grounds* to testimony that, to the individual reader, may appear reliable. They have absolutely no formal sanction from the Church. They constitute a body of facts that may or may not be accepted as genuine. They supply useful matter for spiritual reading and meditation only in so far as they are a help to enable us to realize more vividly the probable surroundings of the Saviour's Passion and Death.

JOSEPH McDONNELL, S.J.

# SCENES FROM THE PASSION

---

## I. GETHSEMANI.

"It was about nine o'clock when Jesus reached Gethsemani with His disciples," says Catherine Emmerich. "The moon had risen and already gave light in the sky, although the earth was still dark. Jesus was most sorrowful and told His Apostles that danger was at hand."<sup>1</sup> Leaving eight of the Apostles at some distance He entered farther into the garden with Peter, James and John. "No words can describe the sorrow which then oppressed His Soul. . . . John asked Him how it was that He who had hitherto always consoled them could now be so dejected. *'My soul is sorrowful even unto death,'* was the reply. And He beheld sufferings and temptations surrounding Him on all sides, and drawing nearer and nearer. . . . Then it was that He said to these Apostles: *'Stay ye here and watch with me. . . Pray lest ye enter temptation.'*"<sup>2</sup>

In the remotest and most lonely portion of the garden there was a cave facing the south. The roof rested on natural pillars, which divided it, like a cathedral, into naves. Hither Jesus had been in the habit of resorting in order to be alone in prayer, and hither now He withdrew, penetrating to the further end. Following his Master, "John had glided to the entrance of the gro'to, the extent of which permitted him to keep at a sufficient distance, so as not to be perceived. The cavity measured about fourteen yards in length by eight or nine in width, and the part where Jesus lay was almost at the end. Through the opening the moon's rays illuminated the interior, whilst the well-beloved disciple, hidden in the shadow, could believe he was invisible" (Olivier).<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Dolorous Passion*, chap. 1. The statement of Catherine Emmerich must be taken with the utmost caution and reserve. See Preface.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *La Passion*.

“When Jesus left His disciples . . . His sorrow and anguish of soul continued to increase, and He was trembling all over when He entered the grotto to pray, like a wayworn traveller hurriedly seeking shelter from a sudden storm; but awful visions pursued Him even there and became more and more clear and distinct” (Emmerich). ,

“Without confusion and without intermingling, He discerned all the various kinds of sin for which He was about to suffer,” says Bourdaloue.<sup>4</sup> “He saw the sins of the kings and those of the people; the sins of the rich and those of the poor; the sins of the fathers and the children; the sins of priests and those of the laity. In these torrents of iniquity He distinguished slanders and calumnies, unchaste acts and adulteries, simony and usury, treachery and revenge; . . . the profligacy of the sensual and the voluptuous, the impieties of libertines and atheists, the impostures and the malignity of hypocrites.” “Frightful mass!” says Bossuet,<sup>5</sup> “all coming to overwhelm Jesus Christ! On whatever side He turns His eyes He sees nothing but torrents of sin which are about to fall upon Him.”

He threw Himself on His face, overwhelmed with sorrow, while Satan, pointing to this limitless ocean of iniquity asked Him: “Dost Thou take this sin, and this, and this upon Thee? Art Thou ready to bear the punishment of all these myriad foul deeds?” Next he charged the spotless Savior with a host of imaginary crimes: with being the cause of the massacre of the Innocents, with not having saved the life of John the Baptist, and so forth. Thus Jesus permitted His Human Soul to be a prey to the temptations, the diffidence, the depression, the weariness with which holy souls are sometimes assailed at the hour of death.

Next He beheld in a series of visions all the terrible sufferings that awaited Him: the agonizing horror of the scourging and of the crowning with thorns, the terrible

<sup>4</sup> *Premier Sermon sur la Passion.*

<sup>5</sup> *Premier Sermon sur la Vendredi Saint.*

journey to Mount Calvery, the crucifixion, the hours of agony that followed it, and finally His bitter Death. His Human Nature shrank back dismayed and overwhelmed, and from His lips burst forth the cry: "*Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass away. Nevertheless, not My Will, but Thine be done.*"

"I saw the cavern in which He was kneeling filled with frightful figures," says Catherine Emmerich;<sup>6</sup> ". . . the horror of death and terror which He felt as Man at the sight of the expiatory sufferings about to come upon Him, surrounded Him and assailed Him under the form of hideous spectres. He fell from side to side, clasping His hands; His body was covered with a cold sweat, and He trembled and shuddered. He then arose, but His knees were shaking and apparently scarcely able to support Him; His countenance was pale and quite altered in appearance, and His lips white. It was about half-past ten when He rose from His knees and, bathed in a cold sweat, directed His trembling, weak footsteps towards His three Apostles."

The Apostles were asleep, but Jesus gently wakened them, saying: "*What? Could you not watch one hour with Me? Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation; for the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*"<sup>7</sup> They were dazed and terrified when they beheld Him pale and utterly exhausted, His voice almost inaudible, trembling and shuddering from head to foot.

Again Jesus returned to the grotto and fell prostrate with His face to the ground. Again the flood-gates of iniquity were raised and the tempest was let loose upon His Human Soul. "*Great as the sea is Thy sorrow,*" O most loving Savior of mankind! Of old Thou didst allay the tempest on Genesareth, "*and there followed a great calm*"; but now the billows rise and roar above Thee and engulf Thee in their dread embrace, and Thou wilt not move Thy hand to stay their fury.

<sup>6</sup> *The Dolorous Passion*, chap. i.

<sup>7</sup> Matt. xxvi. 40, 41.

“When Jesus, unrelieved of all the weight of His sufferings, returned to the grotto,” says Catherine Emmerich, “He fell prostrate, with His face to the ground. . . . His soul had to sustain a second interior combat which lasted three-quarters of an hour. . . . In the second agony, Jesus beheld, to its fullest extent and in all its bitterness, the expiatory sufferings which would be required to satisfy Divine Justice.” Elsewhere she adds: “No tongue can describe what anguish and what horror overwhelmed the Soul of Jesus at the sight of so terrible an expiation—His sufferings were so great, indeed, that a bloody sweat issued from all the pores of His Sacred Body.”<sup>8</sup>

The Soul of Jesus beheld the sufferings of His Apostles, the afflictions of the early Christians, the tepidity and ingratitude of His chosen friends, the malice and corruption of the wicked. He saw how apostates and heresiarchs would rend the sacred garment of the Church, and draw after them countless numbers of His children to destruction. “Bearing a prominent place in these mournful visions, which were beheld by the Soul of Jesus, I saw Satan, who dragged away and strangled a multitude of men redeemed by the Blood of Christ. . . . In His bitter agony Jesus looked around as though seeking help, . . . and from every pore of His Sacred Body there burst forth large drops of blood, which fell trickling down to the ground” (Emmerich).

Again and again He cried aloud in the extremity of His anguish, “*Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass away. Nevertheless, not My Will but Thine be done.*”

What touched Him very keenly was the utter coldness and indifference shown by men—even His friends—towards the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. He saw Himself neglected and abandoned in His churches. He saw that oftentimes the poorest of the poor were better lodged than He was. He saw crowds of men in every age outraging and striking at Him, with hatred in their

---

<sup>8</sup> *The Dolorous Passion.*



hearts and impious blasphemy upon their lips. He saw these human devils receive Him into their sin-polluted hearts, where Satan reigned supreme.

"I beheld the blood," says Catherine Emmerich, "flowing in large drops down the face of the Savior, His hair matted together and His beard bloody and entangled. After the vision which I have last described, He fled, so to speak, out of the cave and returned to His disciples. But He tottered as He walked; His appearance was that of a man covered with wounds and bowing beneath a heavy burden, and He stumbled at every step."

As once more He stood by the three Apostles in the moonlight, His face pale and stained with blood and His hair hanging about Him in disorder. "*He found them again asleep, for their eyes were heavy,*"<sup>9</sup> and they knew not what to answer Him. They could scarcely recognize Him, so much changed was He. When He desired to return to the grotto they had to lead Him back. "It was then," says Catherine Emmerich, "about a quarter-past eleven."

Again the awful vision of His Passion rose before Him, and again "*He prayed the third time saying the very same words.*"<sup>10</sup> And Angels came to comfort Him and show Him the many thousands of martyrs, confessors, and virgins who in after years would follow Him so faithfully.

"*Then He cometh to His disciples and saith to them: Sleep ye now and take your rest; behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go: behold he is at hand that will betray Me.*"<sup>11</sup>

## II. THE SCOURGING.

Near the guard-house to the north of Pilate's palace stood the pillar where criminals were scourged. Strong cruel men, with sinewy arms, drag Jesus to this spot;

<sup>9</sup> Matt. xxvi. 43.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 44.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 45, 46.

they tear off His garments. Jesus throws His arms round the pillar, "and when His hands were thus raised they fastened them with a rope to the ring at the top of the pillar, and then dragged them to such a height that His feet, which were tightly bound to the base of the pillar, scarcely touched the ground" (Emmerich). "At the Procurator's order the executioner began to strike slowly, spacing the blows on the quivering flesh in such a way as to leave no part without pain. Furrows adjoined furrows, before crossing one another in skilled conjuncture, shaking the whole system with a fearful shock. Soon the skin came off in bloody strips. The bones of the ribs, dug out by the sharp ends, became visible. . . . Even His divine face and eyes did not escape, for it was a trick of the executioners to lash the victim's face to increase the pain of his punishment" (Olivier).

According to Catherine Emmerich, several executioners succeeded to one another. They were supplied with drink to make them still more savage. They used various kinds of lashes: sinews of the ox, rods, thorny sticks covered with knots and splinters, "small chains and straps, covered with iron hooks, which penetrated to the bone and tore off large pieces of flesh at every blow."

After they had thus scourged Him in the most brutal manner, they untied Him, and having placed Him with His back to the pillar, again began to scourge Him with the utmost fury, till "the Body of our Lord was perfectly torn to shreds and was but one wound," says Catherine Emmerich: "The dreadful scourging had been continued without intermission for three-quarters of an hour," she continues, "when a stranger rushed from amongst the crowd . . . and severed the cords. . . . Jesus fell almost without consciousness on the ground, which was bathed with His Blood."

Forty lashes was the utmost that the law allowed, and according to the Revelations of St. Bridget He received about 5,000!

### III. THE CROWNING WITH THORNS.

The scene is changed. Our Savior is seated on a low stool, a ragged purple cloak around Him, a large reed in His hands, which are tightly bound in front, and on His head a crown of thorns. "The crown of thorns was made of three branches plaited together, the greatest part of the thorns being purposely turned inward so as to pierce our Lord's head" (Emmerich). "*And bowing the knee before Him they mocked Him, saying: Hail, King of the Jews. And spitting upon Him, they took the reed and struck his head.*"<sup>12</sup>

It is related in the Revelations of St. Bridget<sup>13</sup> that towards the conclusion of the scourging a person standing by advanced and said: "Do you want to kill this man outright without his being condemned to death?" He then cut the cords that bound our Lord. Gasping, bathed in blood, and one great mass of wounds, our Savior sank upon the ground. He lay there, almost unconscious, for some moments, till the soldiers returned and, after striking Him, bade Him rise and follow them. His limbs would scarce support His body, and He tottered as though unable to stand. The soldiers helped Him to put on His garments and then dragged Him hastily along with them through the Prætorium into the guard-house. "*And stripping Him, they put a scarlet cloak about Him. And plaiting a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head and a reed in his right hand.*"<sup>14</sup>

According to the Revelations of St. Bridget, this crown was pressed down most tightly on the sacred head of our Lord and descended even to the middle of his forehead.<sup>15</sup> St. Peter Damian and St. Laurence Justinian say that the thorns were so long that they perforated even the brain,<sup>16</sup> and, moreover, the fresh thorns probably contained poisonous matter that diffused itself through the brain and caused most exquisite torture. Nothing short of the

<sup>12</sup> Matt. xxvii. 29, 30.

<sup>13</sup> Revel. i, c. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Matt. xxvii. 28, 29.

<sup>15</sup> "Corona spinea captiti ejus arctissime posita fuit, quae ad medium frontis descendebat" (Revel. iv. c. 70).

<sup>16</sup> "Spinae cerebrum perforantes."

exercise of the divine power on the part of our Lord prevented Him from dying under this terrible infliction. Any ordinary human being would, under such circumstances, we may believe, have lost consciousness and died. "He often closed His eyes and gave forth grievous moans as of one about to die," was the revelation said to have been made to Blessed Agatha of the Cross; and according to St. Bridget's Revelations, "Torrents of blood streamed down His face and filled His hair, His eyes, His beard, till nothing but blood was to be seen,"<sup>17</sup> so that in the pathetic words of St. Bonaventure, "No longer could you behold the face of the Lord Jesus but rather that of a man flayed alive."<sup>18</sup>

The Roman cohort gathered round, shouting and laughing, to see the fun. They would inaugurate the reign of the new king. They forced Him to sit down on the stump of an old broken pillar. Someone in the crowd pushed Him over and He fell. With His poor bound hands He could not save Himself. It was with utmost pain and difficulty that He got upon His lacerated knees and rose. The fall had partly wrenched the crown from off His head. They pressed it on again and struck it with the reed He held, to keep it fast. "*And they struck His head with a reed. And they did spit on Him.*"<sup>19</sup> Then there was a solemn march past, and each in turn bent the knee in mockery before Him and saluted Him with mocking words: "*Ave Rex Indæorum.*" "*And bowing the knee before Him, they mocked Him, saying: Hail, King of the Jews.*"<sup>20</sup> And then again they gathered round Him and spit on Him and struck Him on the head: "*And spitting upon Him, they took the reed, and struck His head.*"<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile the poor Victim was suffering the most excruciating torture. Every blow they struck the crown was agony. Many times they may have pushed Him from

<sup>17</sup> "Plurimi revuli sanguinis decurrentes per faciem ejus, et crimea et oculos et barbam replentes nihil nisi sanguis totum videbatur."

<sup>18</sup> "Non amplius facies Domini Jesu, sed hominis excoriati videretur."

<sup>19</sup> Mark xv. 19.

<sup>20</sup> Matt. xxvii. 29.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 30.

His seat, and many times some brutal soldier, under pressure from the crowd behind, may have fallen over Him, while his comrades trampled Him beneath their feet. Yet never a word was uttered. "He was crowned with thorns that we may be crowned with the elect in heaven," says Denis the Carthusian. <sup>22</sup> "O Divine Love!" cries out another, "I know not whether I shall call You sweet or cruel for You seem to be both." "Ah, yes, my Jesus," says St. Alphonsus, "love has made you for our sake sweetness itself, since it inflamed You with so passionate a love for our souls, but it has rendered you cruel to Yourself in making You suffer such frightful torments." <sup>23</sup> It was our sins, especially sins of thought, that forced these terrible sufferings on our Lord. "*Spinæ quid nisi peccata?*"—What are the thorns but our sins?" asks St. Augustine.

And oh, the outrage of it! to *spit* upon the Face of Christ! No greater outrage can be offered to a human being than to spit into his face. But to spit into the face of Him before whose august Presence the very angels bow in deepest reverence and veil their countenance in awe!

"This shameful scene," says Catherine Emmerich, "was protracted a full half-hour," but now the entertainment of the Roman soldiers was coming to a close. Pilate was about to show the poor, bruised, torn, bleeding Victim to the people.

#### IV. ECCE HOMO!

A white-robed figure was standing at the summit of the marble steps that led up to the Prætorium. He had made a sign to the soldiers to bring up their Prisoner. It was Pontius Pilate. The soldiers, thinking that the patrician Governor wished to have a nearer view of their unfortunate Victim, hustled Jesus up the steps with brutal insult and buffoonery. Meanwhile Pilate had withdrawn in the

<sup>22</sup> "Coronatus est spinis ut nos coronemur corona danda electis in paradiso."

<sup>23</sup> *Clock of the Passion.*

direction of the loggia or tribune, over the large entrance arch, and looking out on the great square below. Here a vast multitude of people were assembled; gathered together, doubtless, by the prospect of witnessing a public execution.

"Jesus," says Catherine Emmerich, "had the scarlet cloak still thrown over His shoulders, the crown of thorns on His head and the reed in His fettered hands. He was perfectly unrecognizable, His eyes, mouth, and beard being covered with blood, His body but one wound, and His back bowed down as that of an aged man, while every limb trembled as He walked. When Pilate saw Him, even he started, and shuddered with horror and compassion."<sup>24</sup>

What an awful sight! Who could resist the silent eloquence of such a vision of unutterable misery and woe? "That Head surrounded with thorns; that face furrowed by the lash and bruised with blows; those half-closed eyes, whence the tears were flowing; those parched lips, ready to breathe forth the last sigh; that gasping chest, the awful wounds of which were revealed between the folds of the mantle; those bound hands, which held a shaking reed—that whole accumulation of sorrow and of humiliations, at once grievous and repulsive, yet with a majesty shining over all, like a ray of sunshine on a wreck; was not this enough to impress every mind and conquer every heart?"<sup>25</sup> So, doubtless, Pilate thought. The sight would soften even the stony heart of the Jewish priests and people, and thus leave him free to follow the dictates of common justice and set the Nazarene free.

Pilate advanced right up to the edge of the tribune, and looked down from the balustrade upon the sea of upturned and expectant faces in the court below. Then drawing Jesus forward, he showed Him to the people, with the words, "*Ecce Homo!—Behold the Man!*"

There was a momentary hush, as the people gazed with wonder on the sad sweet face, so changed, so full of misery and suffering, and yet so full of majesty. Were

<sup>24</sup> *The Dolorous Passion.*

<sup>25</sup> Olivier, *La Passion.*

they going to relent? Yes, surely He has had enough, and they will call for His release.

The priests were sore afraid lest pity should prevail and they should lose their prey. From the outskirts of the crowd they raised the cry: "*Crucify Him. Crucify Him.*"<sup>26</sup> Their servants joined in, and then the multitude, until the square re-echoed with the wild tumultuous shout: "*Crucify Him. Crucify Him.*" Pilate's plans were wrecked. He was astonished—terrified. Could they really mean to crucify this innocent Man? Crucify Him! "Shall I crucify your king?" he asked. And straight back came the answer from the priests, "We have no king but Cæsar. Crucify Him."<sup>27</sup>

It was all in vain. Weak, vacillating Pilate! Why not tell them, once for all, you cannot condemn an innocent man to death, and least of all to such a horrible death as crucifixion?

Wrathfully, contemptuously, the Roman Governor looked forth upon the surging, shouting, maddened crowd. "Take Him you and crucify Him," he jerked out with a look of scorn, "for I find no cause in Him."

"We have a law and according to that law He ought to die, because He made Himself the son of God,"<sup>28</sup> came the answer from below.

"The Son of God!" The Procurator trembled. Could this strange impassive Being, whose conduct was so puzzling—could He really be the Son of God? It was the light of a great grace struggling for admittance into his darkened pagan soul. But by his cowardly compliance he had rendered himself unworthy of it.

## V. THE JOURNEY TO CALVARY.

And after they had mocked Him, they took off the cloak from Him, and put on Him His own garments, and they led Him away to crucify Him.—MATT. xxvii. 31.

And bearing His own cross He went forth to that place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew Golgotha.—JOHN x|x. 17.

It was about ten o'clock in the morning, according to Catherine Emmerich, when Pilate pronounced his in-

<sup>26</sup> John xix. 6.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 15.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 6, 7.

iquitous sentence on Jesus. He was at once handed over to the soldiers for execution. Their first act was to tear off with cruel violence the purple garment they had clothed Him in, thereby reopening all His wounds. They then restored to Him His own garments. "This they did," remarks St. Ambrose, "in order that Jesus might be known at least by His garments, for His beautiful countenance was so disfigured by the blood and wounds that it would be difficult to recognize Him without His own clothes." "Jesus did not wait," says St. Thomas of Villanova, "until the cross was placed by the executioners upon Him; He took it Himself with His own hands and placed it joyfully on His wounded shoulders." He "knelt down by the side of the cross," says Catherine Emmerich, "encircled it with His sacred arms and kissed it three times, addressing at the same time a most touching prayer of thanksgiving to His Heavenly Father for the work of Redemption which He had begun."

Soon the long cavalcade began to move. It was the triumphant march of the great Conqueror going forth to crush the powers of hell, and free the world from the slavery of Satan and the bonds of sin. A centurion led the way, whose business it was to keep order and restrain the crowd. Beside him walked a herald sounding on his trumpet and bearing aloft the inscription written by Pilate.<sup>29</sup> "I beheld our Blessed Savior and Redeemer," writes Catherine Emmerich, "His bare feet swollen and bleeding, His back bent as though He were about to sink under the heavy weight of the cross, and His whole body covered with wounds and blood. He appeared to be half-fainting from exhaustion (having had neither refreshment nor sleep since the supper of the previous night), weak from loss of blood and parched from thirst produced by fever and pain. . . . His hands were cut by the cords with which they had been bound; His face was bloody and disfigured, His hair and beard saturated with blood. . . . His countenance bore an expres-

<sup>29</sup> "Præcedente titulo qui causam poenae indicaret," with the custom on such occasions, according to Suetonius.



sion of combined love and resignation." On either side of our Lord were a number of soldiers under arms. Behind Him walked the two thieves, and a number of Pharisees brought up the rear. Still further behind, at some distance from the procession, rode Pilate, in the midst of his attendants, preceded by a squadron of cavalry and followed by an escort of infantry. "Persons on the roofs of houses and at windows insulted our Lord with opprobrious language; the slaves who were working in the streets threw mud and filth at Him; even the children, incited by His enemies, had filled their pinafores with sharp stones, which they threw down before their door as He passed, that He might be obliged to walk over them" (Emmerich).

The distance from the Prætorium to Calvary was not long—about 600 yards at most. A person walking at an ordinary pace could easily cover the space within half an hour. But the path was very uneven and irregular. Despite a certain accumulation of rubbish and debris, which in places rises to a height of five or six feet about the original level, the general aspect of the *Via Dolorosa* is pretty much the same now as it was in the days of our Lord. The "sixty or eighty feet of cinders," which some modern writers would have us believe are heaped above the old road of Roman days, are all a myth. Hence the path had pretty much the same variety of hill and hollow that it has today, and was, if anything, more rugged and uneven then than now. All this added to the difficulty of carrying the cross. It was immensely heavy and pressed with agonizing pain into the sacred shoulder of the Savior, worn out and fainting as He was with pain and loss of blood. Every jolt of the great wooden beam, as it trailed over the uneven ground, pressed it deeper into the galled and wounded flesh and sent a fresh quiver of unspeakable agony through the exquisitely sensitive body of the Redeemer.

As the road slopes rapidly towards Acra it forms a hollow, which after rain was often filled with mud or water and large stones. When Jesus reached this spot

His strength gave out; He stumbled and fell heavily upon the ground beneath His cruel load. This brought the procession for a moment to a stand-still. At first He was unable to rise. The executioners instead of helping Him to get upon His feet, abused and struck Him with most barbarous cruelty, till, at length, with the utmost difficulty, he succeeded in getting up, all covered with mud and dirt. The crown of thorns had been torn from His head by the fall. The cruel soldiers put it on again and pressed it down, causing Him thereby most horrible pain.

Meanwhile His Blessed Mother, under the guidance of St. John, had taken up a position on the route along which her Divine Son would have to pass.<sup>30</sup> "She was pale," says Catherine Emmerich, "her eyes were red with weeping, and she was loosely wrapped in a cloak of bluish-grey color." The clamor of the advancing multitude was growing louder. She could even hear the voice of the herald, proclaiming aloud at intervals the approaching execution of the criminals; and soon the cursings and revilings of the executioners and others reached her ears. As the cavalcade came up she stood forth, a conspicuous object, in a speechless agony of grief. "What woman is this?" they asked. "She is the Mother of the Galilæan," was the answer. "When the cruel men heard this," says Catherine Emmerich, "far from being moved to compassion, they began to make game of the grief of this most afflicted Mother; they pointed at her, and one of them took the nails which were to be used in fastening Jesus to the cross and presented them to her in an insulting manner." She turned away and fixed her eyes on the bleeding drooping form of Her Divine Son as He staggered onward, looking as though at every instant He would fall prostrate to the earth beneath His load.<sup>31</sup> Then for a moment He raised His head, and looked His Mother full in the face. What a

<sup>30</sup> "Maria ivit celeriter per allam viam brevioram et compendiosam" (Ludolph, *Vita Christi*).

<sup>31</sup> The Gospel makes no mention of this meeting, but tradition is strongly in its favor.

look of mingled sorrow and compassion! At that instant He tripped, and fell the second time upon His hands and knees. With a mother's instinct Mary flew to His assistance. She saw, she thought of, nothing else but Him. She was on her knees beside Him, with her arms flung convulsively around Him, ere the crowd around had realized what she was doing. Even some of the soldiers were touched by this distressing scene. It was so overpowering that even these coarse men forgot to scoff, and the holy women and St. John had time to raise her from the ground, and with gentle force withdraw her from the crowd. Then the archers raised our Lord and eased Him somewhat of His load.

According to Catherine Emmerich it was on the occasion of the third fall of our Lord beneath His cross that Simon of Cyrene and his sons were compelled to help our Blessed Savior.<sup>32</sup> The Pharisees, seeing the extreme exhaustion of their Victim, were beginning to fear lest He should die upon the road, and they should thus be deprived of the pleasure of seeing Him crucified. Just at this juncture a man happened to meet the procession. He was coming in the opposite direction along the road from the Damascus gate. He was a pagan, or at most a proselyte, and had manifestly taken no part in the proceedings of the morning. Possibly he manifested sympathy with our Savior in His sufferings, and thereby attracted the hostile attention of the mob. At any rate the soldiers forced him to help their Prisoner in carrying the cross. Such arbitrary acts were not uncommon among the Romans. "If a soldier impose a task on you, take care not to resist or even to murmur, else you may receive blows," is the wise advice of an old Roman writer. Somewhat in this spirit Simon accepted the unpleasant duty forced upon him. According to St. Luke, "*They laid the cross on him to carry after Jesus.*"<sup>33</sup> Hence it appears that Simon did not bear the cross simultane-

<sup>32</sup> Some writers place the incident of Simon the Cyrenean as occurring previous to the meeting between Christ and His Blessed Mother.

<sup>33</sup> Luke xxiii. 26.

ously with Christ, but rather carried it by himself, following our Lord.

Jesus, thus released from the overwhelming burden of the cross, was now able to proceed on His journey. Yet He seemed to be growing weaker every moment. The weather was oppressive, the sky was growing more than usually dark, and an ominous stillness, the forerunner of a coming storm, was in the air. The way was getting steeper and the Divine Victim showed signs of utter collapse; so much so that probably the soldiers had to help Him on, and the Pharisees had serious fears that He might not live to reach the place of execution. Catherine Emmerich represents His as falling seven times. It may have been at one of these falls that, according to tradition, an event occurred that is not mentioned in the Gospel and of which in consequence no mention is made by several Catholic writers of repute upon the Passion. When Christ was half-way up the ascent, the door of a dwelling-house close by was suddenly opened, and a woman of majestic mien came forth bearing in her hand a cloth soaked in water. This she very gently and lovingly applied to our Lord's sacred countenance, caked all over as it was with dust and blood and tears. He wiped His face with it, and as He handed it back to her a look of tender love and gratitude was in His eyes. It was all the work of a moment. The soldiers pushed her rudely back and she took refuge in her home again. On examining the cloth, great indeed was her astonishment to find quite clearly marked on it the impress of the Sacred Face.<sup>34</sup> Veronica, it is said, placed the sacred cloth in a wooden box which Baronius speaks of as having been preserved in the Church of St. Marie des Martyrs, whence it was afterwards transferred to Rome, where it is now kept in the Vatican Basilica. It represents our Lord without

---

<sup>34</sup> Veronica's house is still preserved. The lower portion lies somewhat below the present level of the street. The name Veronica seems to be a corruption of Βερονίκη the Greek form of the word Berenice. The derivation *Vera*, true, and Εικόνη image, does not seem admissible; it would be a most unwarrantable combination of Latin and Greek.

the crown of thorns. At any rate the crown does not appear in the sacred image. Possibly the Jews had relieved Him of this cruel diadem, as they had of the cross itself, through fear that He might die before He reached the place of execution.

As our Lord was about to enter on the slight ascent to Calvary itself, a group of women approached and by their words and gestures testified their loving sympathy with the Redeemer. Many of them carried children in their arms. Our Savior noticed them and heard their lamentations, and for the first time since He had left the Prætorium He spoke. His words were almost stern. They pointed to the awful punishment that awaited the doomed city of Jerusalem, and that, on another occasion, had wrung from Him the touching lament, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered together thy children as the hen doth her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not." But now it was too late. The deed was done, and His words to the holy women were rather words of menace and prophetic warning. "Daughters of Jerusalem," He said to them, "weep not over Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days shall come wherein they will say: Blessed are the barren and the wombs that have not borne, and the paps that have not given suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains: Fall upon us; and to the hills: Cover us. For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?"<sup>35</sup> The Savior had before Him the terrible scene of the destruction of the once holy city, of which He had already spoken in such vivid terms. "For the days shall come upon thee, and thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee: and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone: because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation."<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Luke xxiii. 28-31.

<sup>36</sup> Luke xix. 43, 44.

It was now approaching noon, yet the darkness was increasing and the leaden sky above stretched like a vast pall to the horizon. The air was well-nigh suffocating, and the world around as silent as though Nature stood appalled at the awful crime that men were here about to perpetrate.

## VI. THE CRUCIFIXION.

And they came to the place that is called Golgotha, which is the place of Calvary. And they gave Him wine to drink, mixed with gall. And when He had tasted He would not drink.—*MATT. XXVII. 33, 34.*

And crucifying Him, they divided His garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. And it was the third hour, and they crucified Him.—*MARK XV. 24, 25.*

And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, they crucified Him there; and the robbers, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.—*LUKE XXIII. 33.*

And Pilate wrote a title also; and he put it upon the cross. And the writing was, *Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.*—*JOHN XIX, 19.*

Utterly worn out and prostrate with fatigue and loss of blood, dazed with the agony caused by the crowning with thorns, the Divine Victim at last reached the place of execution.<sup>37</sup> The first act of the executioners seems to have been to give our Lord wine to drink mixed with gall. It was usual to give some potion to criminals about to be executed, that would deaden their sense of pain. Jesus, though the thirst of which He afterwards spoke on the cross must already have been intense, merely tasted the bitterness of the gall, but refused Himself the alleviation that the drinking of the potion might have afforded Him. "*And when He had tasted,*" says St. Matthew, "*He would not drink.*"<sup>37</sup> They then proceeded to strip Him of His garments. This caused Him unspeakable anguish. His inner vest was by this time glued fast to His Sacred Body, by the blood with which He had been covered from head to foot after the terrible scourge-

<sup>37</sup> Calvary is a sort of rocky elevation of, at most, seventeen feet in height. A gentle ascent led to the summit from the south-east. On the remaining three sides it was bordered by almost perpendicular rocks. According to St. Jerome (*Epist. xlv. 3*) our first parents were buried here, but this does not seem to tally with the Book of Josue (*xiv. 15*). In one of the gardens to the west of Calvary was the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

<sup>38</sup> *Matt. xxvii. 34.*

ing. It would be impossible to realize the suffering caused by the violent dragging off of this garment and the consequent re-opening of His wounds. More torturing still was it to the exquisite virginal modesty of the Savior to behold Himself thus exposed to the gaze of the vile lewd rabble that surrounded Him. He was then bidden to lie down upon the cross. "The Lamb of God," says St. Alphonsus Liguori, "stretches Himself on His bed of pain, presents His hands and feet to be nailed by the executioners, and, lifting up His eyes to heaven, offers to His Eternal Father the great sacrifice of His life for the salvation of men."<sup>39</sup> According to the Revelations of Catherine Emmerich, the executioners tied the right arm tightly so that the open palm would rest over the place where it was to be nailed to the cross. The large coarse nail<sup>40</sup> is carefully held in position for a moment over the centre of the palm. A quick sharp blow of the hammer drives it through the flesh. The Sacred Blood squirts up into the eyes of the executioner, and a quiver of agony passes through our Blessed Savior's body, whilst an involuntary cry of anguish bursts from His lips. Blow after blow of the hammer is heard, as the nail pierces the wood and is driven home into its place. The torture is unbearable. Owing to the contraction of the nerves and muscles the whole body is drawn towards the wounded hand, so that the other palm will no longer reach to the corresponding place in the opposite arm of the cross. With ropes these strong men drag and force it to its place, then tie it tightly down and drive the second nail as before through the quivering flesh of the open hand, and into the hard wood on which it rests, until that nail too is hammered home.

And who is she that stands with head averted listening to the dreadful sounds? Why does she tremble all over like an aspen leaf as each blow of the hammer seems to send a thrill of speechless agony through all her being?

<sup>39</sup> *Clock of the Passion*, chap. xii.

<sup>40</sup> One of the nails preserved in Rome is about four inches long and about half an inch wide at the base.

Ah, me! it is His mother—the tenderest most loving Mother that ever looked upon the death of a beloved son. She does not faint away, she scarcely weeps. Her sorrow is too deep for tears. She stands there through it all, uniting the sacrifice of her breaking heart with that of her Divine Son, to rescue us, the children of her love, from everlasting death.

“Stabat Mater dolorosa  
Juxta crucem lacrymosa.”

Meanwhile, owing to the contraction of the muscles, the lower extremities of our Lord's Sacred Body had been drawn upwards, till the legs were almost doubled, with the feet against the cross. So much so that, drag and pull as they might, the executioners could scarcely draw the feet down to the place prepared at the foot of the cross for the reception of the great coarse nail. “The Whole Body of our Lord,” says Catherine Emmerich, “had been dragged upward and contracted by the violent manner in which the executioners had stretched out His arms, and His knees were bent up; they therefore flattened and tied them down tightly with cord. But soon, perceiving that His feet did not reach the bit of wood which was placed for them to rest upon, they became infuriated. Some of their number proposed making fresh holes for the nails which pierced His hands, as there would be considerable difficulty in removing the bit of wood, but the others would do nothing of the sort. . . . With fearful oaths and imprecations, having fastened a rope to His right leg, they dragged it violently until it reached the wood, and then tied it down as tightly as possible. The agony which Jesus endured from this violent tension was indescribable.”

Whether one nail was used or two is purely matter of conjecture. We may suppose the feet placed one above the other and a very large nail, longer and sharper than the other two, carefully held in position over the upper instep, while with deft blows of the hammer the executioner drives it, first through one foot, then through the other, then down deep into the wood of the cross beneath.



This done, the executioners stand up and, laughing brutally, they bid the Savior, if He be the Son of God, to free Himself from the nails and rise from off His bed of pain.

All is now ready and they raise the cross. As the people catch the first sight of the form of the Crucified Redeemer being raised above the ground, a great shout of mockery and triumph rends the air. The cross is shoved to the very edge of the hole in which it is to stand. They balance it a moment on the brink, then push it in. It falls into its socket with a heavy thud that well-nigh tears the Sacred Body down, and rends the wounds until they gape and spout forth torrents of His Blood. No doubt a cry of agonizing pain escapes the Victim. The sustaining power of the Godhead alone prevented Him from swooning off into unconsciousness. Stakes are driven into the ground around the cross to keep it upright, and each blow sends a corresponding thrill of agony through the Divine Sufferer.

This was the moment so eagerly looked forward to by Scribes and Pharisees alike. "Vah," they cried, "Thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days buildest it up again, save Thyself by coming down from the cross." <sup>41</sup> "He saved others, Himself He cannot save." <sup>42</sup> "Let Him save Himself if He be Christ the elect of God." <sup>43</sup> "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said: I am the Son of God." <sup>44</sup>

"It is an unheard of thing," says Bossuet, "for cruelty and derision to be joined together." <sup>45</sup> For the sight of extreme suffering usually suffices to exercise the spirit of mockery. Not so, however, in our Lord's case. It is hell itself that, in the person of the Pharisees, vents its fury against the Immaculate Lamb of God. "The demons," says Bossuet, "are necessarily cruel and mocking; cruel, because they are envious; mocking, because they are proud. . . . That is the reason why on this day,

<sup>41</sup> Mark xv. 29.  
<sup>44</sup> Matt. xxvii. 43.

<sup>42</sup> Matt. xxvii. 42.   <sup>43</sup> Luke xxiii. 35.  
<sup>45</sup> *Deuxieme Sermon sur la Passion.*

when the spirits of mockery and of cruelty prevail, there is such a strange commingling of derision and cruelty that we scarce can tell which predominates." <sup>46</sup>

Yes, truly, hell, for the moment, is let loose to do its worst against the Son of God. "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." <sup>47</sup> said Jesus to the rabble that came out to arrest Him. Nor would He stay their hand in aught until He had broken for ever the empire of these same powers of darkness.

Meanwhile, amid the outcry, they raise the crosses of the two thieves—"one on the right hand, and one on the left," <sup>48</sup> as St. Matthew expressly informs us. Thus the centre, the place of honor, so to speak, is given to Christ, as though the worst of the three, in this way fulfilling the prophecy of Isaias, "*He was reputed with the wicked.*" <sup>49</sup>

In accordance with Roman law, <sup>50</sup> the soldiers had nailed an inscription at the head of the cross. This inscription was supposed to bear the name of the criminal and the crime for which he suffered. In the present instance it consisted, it is said, of a small board about a foot long, painted white, on which, in letters of red, were written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, so that all might understand, the words, "*Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.*" <sup>51</sup> In the hurry and excitement of the crucifixion the chief priests had not noticed it, and great was their amazement and indignation on discovering the slight, as they conceived it, that the haughty Roman Governor had put upon themselves and on their nation. It was scandalous and should be taken down at once. They sent a deputation to him on the spot to have it changed. He should have written, "*not the King of the Jews, but that He said, I am the King of the Jews.*" But Pilate remained obdurate. "*What I have written, I have written,*" <sup>52</sup> was the only answer he vouchsafed them. They had to swallow their displeasure as best they could.

<sup>46</sup> Bossuet, *loc. cit.*

<sup>47</sup> Luke xxii. 53.

<sup>48</sup> Matt. xxvii. 38.

<sup>49</sup> Is. liii. 12. <sup>50</sup> Vide Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* vi.; *Dion Cassius*, liv. 3, etc.

<sup>51</sup> John xix. 19,

<sup>52</sup> John xix. 21, 22.

Their task being now accomplished, the executioners withdrew to a short distance to divide the garments of the criminal between them. *"They took His garments, and they made four parts, to every soldier a part,"* says the Evangelist.<sup>53</sup> As to the long robe "without seam," said to have been woven by our Blessed Lady herself, they cast lots for it.

A guard of Roman soldiers under the charge of a centurion remained to preserve order, *"and they sat and watched Him."*<sup>54</sup> To one of their number, the officer in command, this vigil was destined to bring the priceless blessing of conversion. Not a word was uttered in our Lord's defence, thus fulfilling to the letter the sad prophetic words of David, spoken in His Master's name, *"And I looked for one that would grieve together with Me, but there was none; and for one that would comfort me and I found none. And they gave Me gall for my food; and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink."*<sup>55</sup> *"They have dug My hands and My feet. They have numbered all my bones. And they have looked and stared upon Me. They have parted My garments amongst them; and upon My vesture they have cast lots."*<sup>56</sup> One would almost say that the Royal Prophet, especially in this wonderful twenty-first Psalm, was looking on at the events of which he speaks with such marvelous accuracy of detail.

## VII. THE SEVEN LAST WORDS. DEATH OF JESUS.

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

—LUKE XXIII. 34.

This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.—LUKE XXIII. 43.

Woman, behold thy Son.—JOHN XIX. 26.

My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?—MATT. XXVII. 46.

I thirst.—JOHN XIX. 28.

Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.—LUKE XXIII. 46.

It is consummated.—JOHN XIX. 30.

It was about a quarter-past twelve when Jesus was crucified. At the moment that the cross was raised aloft

<sup>53</sup> John xix, 23.

<sup>54</sup> Matt. xxvii. 36.

<sup>55</sup> Psalm lxxviii. 21, 22.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. xxi. 17-19.

a long wailing sound proceeded from the Temple. It was the blast of the trumpets announcing the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb.

Catherine Emmerich describes the appearance of Christ as He hung on the cross. "I contemplated His disfigured countenance, His head encircled with the terrible crown of thorns, which prevented His raising it even for a moment without the most intense suffering. His mouth parched and half open from exhaustion, and His hair and beard clotted with blood. His chest was torn with stripes and wounds, and His elbows, wrists and shoulders so violently distended as to be almost dislocated; blood constantly trickled down from the gaping wounds in His hands, and His flesh was so torn from His ribs that you might almost count them. His legs and thighs, as also His arms, were stretched out almost to dislocation, the flesh and muscles so completely laid bare that every bone was visible, and His whole Body was covered with black, green and reeking wounds. The blood which flowed from His wounds was at first red, but it became by degrees light and watery, and the whole appearance of His Body was that of a corpse ready for interment."

The Scribes and Pharisees still continued heaping insults on our Lord. "Vah!" they cried, "Thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it; save Thy own self. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross."<sup>57</sup> Presently a voice is heard, sweet and low. He is speaking. They listen. Yes, what has He got to say for Himself? Is He reviling them? "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" They can scarcely believe their ears. What, praying God to forgive them! They are amazed. There is a pause, Then from one of the other crosses come the words, "If Thou art the Christ save Thyself and us." But Dismas, the good thief, rebukes his companion. He has been wonderfully touched by the gentle patience of Christ. No one, he reflects, but God could speak such words. The first fruits of Redemption are already reaped. "Neither

<sup>57</sup> Matt. xxvii. 40;

dost thou fear God," he says to the other thief, "seeing thou art under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done no evil."<sup>58</sup> Then turning to the Savior he addressed Him, "Lord, remember me, when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom;"<sup>59</sup> and swift returned the answer from the dying Savior's lips, "*Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise;*" words, remarks St. Augustine, at once full of consolation and of menace for the soul that is the slave of sin. Full of consolation, for they leave room for hope, even to the bed of death; of menace, for they were spoken to only one of the two thieves.<sup>60</sup>

The words of the good thief caused a great commotion among the Jews, who were indignant that anyone should dare to take the part of their Victim. They would have stoned the repentant thief had not the centurion in charge of the soldiers prevented them. Mary's broken heart found comfort in the words of Her Divine Son. With the impetuosity of a mother's tenderness she pressed near to the cross, where the kind-hearted centurion now allowed her to remain. He was to get a rich reward indeed for this little act of kindness to the Mother in her bitter grief.

By this time, they had formed a group beneath the cross. Besides His Mother, there was Mary Magdalen in all the abandonment of passionate sorrow, and John the Beloved Disciple; and probably a number of the holy women who had followed our Lord to Calvary.

The dying Savior's eyes fell upon the little band. He recognized His Mother, and a thrill of tenderest love and sympathy vibrated through her being when she heard the sweet words issue from His lips, "*Woman,*<sup>61</sup> *behold thy Son;*" and then the words addressed to John, "*Son, behold thy Mother;*" From this moment forth, Mary was to be the gentle loving mother of us all, and we, poor err-

<sup>58</sup> Luke xxiii. 40, 41.    <sup>59</sup> Ibid. 42.    <sup>60</sup> St. Augustine, *Sermon 234*.

<sup>61</sup> In the East the word *Woman*, as a method of address, carries with it respect and reverence.

ing sons of Eve, were, in the person of St. John, entrusted to her tender and maternal care.

Meanwhile the darkness had increased to a most alarming degree. Nature seemed hushed into a death-like stillness, and there were not wanting signs of some terrible catastrophe at hand. So occupied were they with their cruel work that the Jews, and especially the priests, had not noticed the threatening aspect of the heavens. But now, as they looked around them, a feeling of terror began to take possession of their hearts. The sky was completely overcast by an almost inky blackness; yet according to Catherine Emmerich, the stars could be seen and "appeared to cast a red and lurid light." The sun was totally eclipsed and the moon glowed "like an immense ball of fire." Darkness, that seemed every moment to grow denser, hung like the pall of night over the entire face of creation. People were filled with panic, and many of those who had come out to witness the crucifixion fled back to the city in terror. Even the Pharisees were reduced to a sort of awe-stricken silence. In Jerusalem itself the entire populace were in a state of panic. The streets were dark and gloomy, the public places empty. Here and there small groups of terrified inhabitants gazed anxiously at the sky, and spoke together in undertones, wondering what the astounding darkness might portend. Catherine Emmerich represents Pilate (who had already returned to Jerusalem) and Herod holding council together in terrified whispers. "They were both extremely agitated," she tells us, "and they contemplated the appearance of the sky from that terrace upon which Herod was standing when he delivered up Jesus to be insulted by the infuriated rabble. 'These events are not in the common course of nature,' they exclaimed, 'they must be caused by the anger of the gods, who are displeased at the cruelty that has been exercised towards Jesus of Nazareth.'"

In the Temple the most terrifying sights were seen, and mysterious voices were heard resounding through its hitherto sacred precincts.

And through it all, he Savior still lived on, dying by inches. His agony was every instant growing more intense. Following on His words to Mary and St. John there was a prolonged silence during which His sufferings were unspeakable. He could scarcely breathe, the agony of His wounded hands and feet was getting unbearable, as the weight of His body slowly opened the wounds more widely. He could find no rest for His head: if He bent it forward, it threw additional weight on His wounded hands; if He threw it back, the crown of thorns caused him additional torture. As He Himself had once expressed it, "the foxes have holes and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."<sup>62</sup> Worst of all, His Soul was a prey to the most terrible desolation. Even His Father seemed to have abandoned Him, so that from the very depths of His unspeakable anguish the cry at length burst from His lips, "*Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani?—My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*"<sup>62</sup>

Ha, cried the Pharisees, "this man calleth Elias."<sup>64</sup>

And almost immediately our Blessed Savior spoke again: "*I thirst.*"<sup>65</sup>

"Now there was a vessel set there full of vinegar. And they, putting a sponge full of vinegar about hyssop, put it to His mouth."<sup>66</sup>

The fever induced by excessive pain and loss of blood had parched our Blessed Savior's mouth and tongue in a terrible degree, and had produced the agony of thirst, which in its extreme form, is one of the worst of physical sufferings. Thus did our Lord atone for the vice of intemperance, that has always claimed so many victims among men. He would have no portion of His Sacred Body free from sufferings. Moreover, this material thirst was typical of His intense longing for the salvation of souls, which increased in ardour as the end drew near.

There was a short period of silence. It was about three o'clock when suddenly there broke from Him a cry

<sup>62</sup> Luke ix. 58; Matt. viii. 20

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 47.

<sup>65</sup> John xix. 28.

<sup>63</sup> Matt. xxvii. 46.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. 29.

that sounded like a pæon of victory. The awful three hours' agony was drawing to a close. The end was near. No tittle of the prophecies regarding Him was left unfulfilled. The great work He had come to perform was all but accomplished. The thirty years of humiliation, sacrifice and suffering were drawing to a close, and soon, as the victorious Conqueror of death and hell, He would enter, in His Sacred Humanity, into the everlasting kingdom of His glory. There was almost a ring of triumph in the voice that said aloud, "*It is consummated.*"<sup>67</sup>

But ere he passed through the gates of death, now flung wide open to admit Him, He would give another proof of His Divinity. He would die in royal fashion, as becomes the Son of God. "I lay down My life that I may take it again," He had declared of old to the Pharisees; no man taketh it away from Me; but I lay it down of Myself, and I have power to lay it down: and I have power to take it up again."<sup>68</sup> Loud above the sacred trumpets that at the hour brayed forth from the Temple to proclaim the immolation of the Paschal Lamb; strong and clear and penetrating rang the last farewell to all the strife and sorrow of this earthly pilgrimage. And Jesus crying with a loud voice, said: "*Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.*"<sup>69</sup> He "bowed his head,"<sup>70</sup> as though bidding death draw near, and lo! the Lord of life and death hangs lifeless in the cross.

Almost at that very instant, as the Scripture tells us, "the earth quaked and the rocks were rent."<sup>71</sup> To the present day is seen the fissure in the solid rock beneath the cross."<sup>72</sup> All nature was convulsed. The very rocks, softer and more sympathetic than the hearts of wicked men, gave loud-voiced testimony to our Lord's divinity, and protested against the awful crimes that had been perpetrated. In terror, such of the Jews as had remained now fled from Calvary, "striking their breasts," as St.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 30.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. x. 17, 18.

<sup>69</sup> Luke xxiii. 46.

<sup>70</sup> John xix. 30.

<sup>71</sup> Matt. xxvii. 51.

<sup>72</sup> This fissure goes down deep into the rock.



Luke informs us.<sup>73</sup> "The crime had not frightened them," writes Père Olivier,<sup>74</sup> "but the sight of Nature, appalled by the wickedness of men,<sup>75</sup> filled them with repentance which we would fain believe merited for them pardon. But they were indeed wrong to fly to the city, where the Divine anger was still more signally manifested. The foundations of Moriah were shaken. The Gate of Nicanor, the brass portals of which could scarcely be moved by twenty men, had opened of itself.<sup>76</sup> The enormous marble lintel which capped the entrance to the sanctuary had split,<sup>77</sup> and the veil of violet, purple and scarlet, which hid the Holy of Holies, was rent in twain.<sup>78</sup> At the same time mysterious voices were heard. 'Let us go hence,' with sounds of hurrying footsteps retiring from the court, from which all mystery had henceforth departed."<sup>79</sup>

Catherine Emmerich gives an interesting and vivid description of the scene in the Temple. "The earthquake," she says, "which produced the deep chasm at Calvary did much damage in different parts of Palestine, but its effects were even more fatal in Jerusalem. Its inhabitants were just beginning to be a little reassured by the return of the light, when their terror was re-awakened with double force by the shocks of the earthquake, and the terrible noise and confusion caused by the downfall of the houses and walls on all sides; their panic was still further increased by the sudden appearance of dead persons, confronting the trembling miscreants, who were flying to hide themselves, and addressing them in the most severe and reproachful language. The High Priests had recommended the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb (which had been stopped by the unexpected dark-

<sup>73</sup> "They returned striking their breasts" (Luke xxiii. 48).

<sup>74</sup> *La Passion*.

<sup>75</sup> "Expavit scelus hominum natura rerum" (St. Augustine, Serm., 41, *De Passione Domini*).

<sup>76</sup> Talmud, *Gemara*, ap. Sepp. iii, 5, 1.

<sup>77</sup> *Gospel of the Hebrews*, quoted by St. Jerome (in Matt. xxvii. 51).

<sup>78</sup> Mark xi. 39: "And the veil of the Temple was rent in two, from the top to the bottom."

<sup>79</sup> Sepp. iii. 53 quotes the Talmud, tract *Teanith* (notes of Père Olivier).

ness) and they were triumphing at the return of light, when suddenly the ground beneath them trembled, the neighboring buildings fell down, and the veil of the Temple was rent in two, from the top to the bottom. Excess of terror at first rendered those on the outside speechless. . . . The priests were endeavoring to continue the sacrifices when suddenly an unexpected and appalling pause ensued; terror and astonishment were depicted on each countenance; all was thrown into confusion; not a sound was heard; the sacrifice ceased; there was a general rush to the gates of the Temple; everyone endeavoring to fly as quickly as possible. And well might they fly, well might they fear and tremble; for in the middle of the multitude there suddenly appeared persons who had been dead and buried for many years. These persons looked at them sternly and reproved them most severely for the crime they had committed that day, in bringing about the death of the 'Just Man,' and calling down His Blood upon their heads. . . . An apparition of the High Priest Zacharias, who was slain between the porch and the altar, was seen in the sanctuary. He uttered fearful menaces, spoke of the death of the second Zacharias and of that of St. John the Baptist, as also of the violent deaths of the other prophets. . . . The prophet Jeremiah likewise appeared; he stood near the altar, and proclaimed, in a menacing tone, that the ancient sacrifice was at an end, and that a new one had commenced. As these apparitions took place in parts where none but the priests were allowed to enter, Caiphas and a few others alone were cognizant of them, and they endeavored, as far as possible, either to deny their reality, or to conceal them. . . . Towards four o'clock all the dead returned to their graves. The sacrifices in the Temple had been so interrupted, and the confusion caused by the different prodigies was so great, that very few persons ate the Paschal lamb on that evening."<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> *The Dolores Passion.*

## VIII. THE TOMB.

What a change from the tumult and excitement of some hours ago! The people, the soldiers, the priests, had all left Calvary. Deep silence reigns around, save for the groans of the two thieves who are still living. A few women with the guards, alone remain around the cross. Presently some soldiers arrive with iron staves to break the arms and legs of the criminals, and thus put an end to their tortures. They began by despatching the two thieves. Then Cassius, the subaltern in command, afterwards baptized and known as Longinus, approaches our Divine Lord. Mary and the holy women shudder with terrified apprehension. Is he going to commit a similar outrage on the Savior? He examines the Sacred Body closely. It is stiff and cold—evidently dead. He must put all doubts at rest, however; so he takes his lance and with both hands drives it with all his might into the side of Jesus. According to both Catherine Emmerich and St. Bridget, he thrust it into the right side, and with such force that the point came out at the left, piercing the Sacred Heart through and through. As he drew it forth, blood and water flowed from the wound. The tradition is that Cassius was secretly well-disposed towards Jesus and wished to save His Sacred Body from outrage. He had very sore eyes, it is said, and some drops from the wounded side fell on them and cured him on the spot. Better still, the eyes of his soul were opened, and he received the light of faith. It was the first great victory of the Sacred Heart.

Meanwhile a member of the Sanhedrin, a certain man named Joseph, a native of Arimathea, who on the previous evening had formally refused to ratify the judgment of his order,<sup>81</sup> was having audience of the Roman Governor. He was actually asking for the Body of the Nazarene in order to render It the last honors. The request was quite unusual. But Pilate knew and esteemed Joseph, who was a man of high repute for his noble

<sup>81</sup> "The same had not consented to their counsel and doings" (Luke xxiii. 51.)

birth, his virtues, and his wealth. Strange to say this exceptional request found favor in the Governor's eyes. He disliked the Jewish priests, and here now was another opportunity of mortifying them, as he had just done in the little incident about the inscription on the cross. He acceded on the spot to the petition, and sent a message to the guards at Calvary to that effect.

It was about four o'clock or later when Joseph of Arimathea, accompanied by his friend Nicodemus, who like himself had long believed in the Divine Mission of the Nazarene, arrived at Calvary. Joseph had brought with him a quantity of fine linen,<sup>82</sup> while Nicodemus brought "a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pounds,"<sup>83</sup> to serve as a sort of temporary embalming for the Body of the Savior. The scene of the taking down of the Body from the cross was an affecting one. With loving and reverent care Joseph assisted by John and Nicodemus and the holy women, withdrew the crown of thorns from the Sacred Head and extricated the nails from the hands and feet, and then gently slipped the Body to the ground. Here it was placed in the arms of the Blessed Mother herself, who covered It with tears and kisses. It would be quite vain to attempt to picture the intensity of Mary's anguish as she held in her arms the mangled Body of Her Son. With infinite affection she washed away, with a soft sponge, the blood that disfigured the Divine Face and clogged the matted beard and hair. With tenderness beyond the reach of words she closed the half-open eyes and mouth, and parted the beautiful locks of auburn hair that she had so often stroked in the days of His early childhood. That sweet form, that in his infant days she had so often fondled in her arms and loaded with caresses, now lay all stiff and cold and gory in her shuddering embrace. What a sea of bitterness deluged and engulfed her soul! "To what shall I compare thee, or to what shall I liken thee, O daughter of Jerusalem," says the prophet Jeremiah, "to

<sup>82</sup> Mark xv. 46.

<sup>83</sup> John xix. 39.

what shall I equal thee that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Sion? For as great as the sea is thy destruction; who shall heal thee?"<sup>84</sup>

The sun was sinking behind the hills, the shadows of evening were gathering fast, and soon the great trumpets would announce from the Temple the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath. There was no time to lose. The funeral procession of the Dead Christ moved silently along the garden paths that led to the Tomb. Mary was chief mourner, with John and Magdalen supporting her on either side. They halted at the entrance, and the Mother lost herself in one long, last most loving embrace of her Divine Son. Then they covered up the face and placed the Body in the Tomb, and by means of levers slowly with united effort, moved the great stone against the entrance. Completely crushed beneath the overwhelming sorrows of this awful day the Virgin Mother was led back by John and Mary Magdalen to Jerusalem, there to await the ravishing moment when her Son should come Himself to change her bitter grief to joy and break to her the glorious tidings of the morrow.

---

### PRAYER TO JESUS IN HIS PASSION.

O Divine and adorable Jesus! Savior of mankind, I most humbly adore thee, and beseech thee to penetrate my soul with the most lively gratitude for that infinite love, which brought thee from heaven to suffer and die for me. Oh, do not permit that I should ever be one of the ungrateful number who forget thy sufferings, or think of them with indifference. Ah! where should I be for all eternity if thou hadst not loved me better than thy own life? Should not thy bitter sufferings fill my heart with compassion and sorrow, since they were occasioned by my sins? Yes, my adorable Savior! divine Victim of my sins! I will at least think of thee, who hast never forgotten me. I will live for thee, who didst not refuse to die for me. I now most fervently offer to thee

<sup>84</sup> Lamentations ii. 13 sqq.

in union with the oblation of thyself on the cross, the sacrifice of my whole being. I desire to accompany thee in spirit through all the stages of thy sufferings, and to commemorate them by the most sincere sentiments of gratitude for thy love, and sorrow for my sins and those of the world. Adorable Jesus! overwhelmed with sorrow for my sins in the Garden of Olives! give me the grace of sincere contrition and perfect conformity to thy holy will;—teach me, by thy wonderful patience in the midst of the most cruel insults, the virtue of meekness—let thy profound humiliations, when thou wert crowned with thorns and clothed with a purple garment, animate me to conquer my pride, and despise sincerely the opinion of the world; associate me to the happy few who followed thee to Mount Calvary, and beheld thee crucified. Thou didst end thy life, O merciful Jesus! in torments and humiliations, deprived of everything this world calls pleasure or consolation; thou art my model. I know that thou art *the way, the truth, and the life*; that all who would be saved must walk after thee, and all who would reign with thee in heaven, must on earth take up their cross and follow thee. I believe these truths, and conjure thee, through thy sufferings from the moment of thy birth unto thy death, to strengthen me to bear whatever cross thou mayest send me. Thou hast not yet; it is true, honored me with a great share in thy sufferings; thou hast spared thy weakness of my age and virtue; but I know that if thou lovest me, I shall not pass through this life without sufferings. I am convinced that thou knowest what is best for me, therefore I now accept from thy hand, with resignation to thy holy will, all the trials and sufferings of my future life. I unite them beforehand to thy cross, and beg of thee to strengthen me now so powerfully by the graces thou hast purchased for me, through thy death and passion, that I may never expose myself to eternal sufferings hereafter. Amen.

*Aspiration.*—I adore thee, and bless thee, O Christ! because by thy cross thou hast redeemed the world.



The  
**International Catholic  
Truth Society**

405 407 BERGEN STREET

BROOKLYN,

NEW YORK

---

The largest Supply House for pamphlets of interest to Catholics in the English-speaking world.

All the pamphlets of the Catholic Truth Society of England, Ireland, Scotland, Australia and America.

Over 3,000 different titles covering subjects in doctrine, devotion, history, controversy, biography, stories of conversions, social problems, etc.

---

SEND 4 CENTS POSTAGE FOR CATALOG