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LENT

Its Meaning and Purpose

From the Liturgical Year

By

DOM GUÉRANGER



New York
THE PAULIST PRESS
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Compiled and Edited from the Liturgical Year
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By
JOHN J. BURKE, C.S.P.

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LENT: ITS MEANING AND PURPOSE

THE SPIRIT AND PRACTICE OF LENT.



THE Church has made this sacred season of Lent a time of recollection and penance, in preparation for the greatest of all her Feasts; she would, therefore, bring into it everything that could excite the faith of her children, and encourage them to go through the arduous work of atonement for their sins. Let us learn from the Liturgy in what light the Church views her children during these forty days. She considers them as an immense army, fighting, day and night, against their spiritual enemies. On Ash Wednesday she calls Lent a *Christian warfare*. Yes, in order that we may have that newness of life, which will make us worthy to sing once more our *Alleluia*, we must conquer our three enemies, the devil, the flesh and the world. We are fellow-combatants with our Jesus, for He, too, submitted to the triple temptation, suggested to Him by Satan in person. Therefore, we must have on our armor, and watch unceasingly. And whereas it is of the utmost importance that our hearts be spirited and brave, the Church gives us a war-song, of heaven's own making, which can fire even cowards with hope of victory and confidence in God's help: it is the Ninetieth Psalm: "He that dwelleth in the help of the Most High." She inserts the whole of it in the Mass of the First Sunday of Lent, and every day introduces several of its verses in the Ferial Office.

She there tells us to rely on the protection, wherewith our Heavenly Father covers us *as with a shield*; to hope *under the shelter of His wings*; to have confidence in Him,

for He will deliver us *from the snare of the hunter*, who had robbed us of the holy liberty of the children of God; to rely upon the succor of the holy Angels, who are our brothers, to whom Our Lord "hath given charge that they keep us in all our ways," and who, when our Jesus permitted Satan to tempt Him, were the adoring witnesses of His combat, and approached Him after His victory, proffering to Him their service and homage. Let us get well into us these sentiments wherewith the Church would have us be inspired; and, during our six weeks' campaign, let us often repeat this admirable canticle, which so fully describes what the soldiers of Christ should be and feel in this season of the great spiritual warfare.

During these forty days of penance, which seem so long to our poor nature, we shall not be deprived of the company of our Jesus. And now, let us look at the Divine Object that is before us. It is our Emmanuel; the same Jesus, but not under the form of the sweet Babe Whom we adored in His crib. He is grown to the fullness of the age of man, and wears the semblance of a sinner, trembling and humbling Himself before the sovereign majesty of His Father Whom *we* have offended, and to Whom He now offers Himself as the Victim of propitiation. He loves us with a brother's love; and seeing that the season for doing penance has begun, He comes to cheer us on by His presence and His Own example. We are going to spend forty days in fasting and abstinence—Jesus, Who is innocence itself, goes through the same penance. We have separated ourselves, for a time, from the pleasures and vanities of the world. Jesus withdraws from the company and sight of men. We intend to assist at the **divine** services more assiduously, and pray more fer-

vently than at other times; Jesus spends forty days and forty nights in praying, like the humblest suppliant; and all this for us. We are going to think over our past sins, and bewail them in bitter grief; Jesus suffers for them and weeps over them in the silence of the desert, as though He Himself had committed them.

No sooner had He received baptism from the hands of St. John, than the Holy Ghost led Him to the desert. The time had come for His public mission to the world; He would begin by teaching us a lesson of immense importance. He leaves the saintly Precursor and the admiring multitude, that had seen the divine Spirit descend upon Him, and heard the Father's voice proclaiming Him to be His Beloved Son; He leaves them and goes into the desert. Not far from the Jordan there rises a rugged mountain, which has received, in after ages, the name of *Quarantana*. It commands a view of the fertile plain of Jericho, the Jordan, and the Dead Sea. It is within a cave of this wild rock that the Son of God now enters, His only companions being the dumb animals who have chosen this same for their own shelter. He has no food wherewith to satisfy the pangs of hunger; the barren rock can yield Him no drink; His only bed must be of stone. Here He is to spend forty days; after which He will permit the Angels to visit Him and bring Him food.

Thus does Our Saviour go before us on the holy path of Lent. He has borne all its fatigues and hardships, so that we, when called upon to tread the narrow way of *our* Lenten Penance, might have His example wherewith to silence the excuses, and sophisms, and repugnances of self-love and pride. The lesson is here too plainly given not to be understood; the law of doing penance for sin is here too clearly shown, and we can-

not plead ignorance: let us honestly accept the teaching and practise it. Jesus leaves the Desert where He had spent the forty days, and begins His preaching with these words which He addresses to all men: "Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. iv. 17). Let us not harden our hearts to this invitation, lest there be fulfilled in us the terrible threat contained in those other words of our Redeemer: "Unless ye shall do penance, ye shall perish" (Luke xiii. 3).

Now, penance consists in contrition of the soul, and in mortification of the body; these two parts are essential to it. The *soul* has willed the sin; the *body* has frequently coöperated in its commission. Moreover, man is composed of both soul and body; both, then, should pay homage to their Creator. The body is to share with the soul either the delights of heaven or the torments of hell; there cannot, therefore, be any thorough Christian life, or any earnest penance, where the body does not take part, in both, with the soul.

But it is the soul which gives reality to penance. The Gospel teaches this by the examples it holds out to us of the Prodigal Son, of Magdalen, of Zaccheus, and of St. Peter. The soul, then, must be resolved to give up every sin; it must heartily grieve over those it has committed; it must hate sin; it must shun the occasions of sin. The Sacred Scriptures have a word for this inward disposition, which has been adopted by the Christian world, and admirably expresses the state of the soul that has turned away from its sins: this word is *conversion*. The Christian should, therefore, during Lent, study to excite himself to this repentance of heart, and look upon it as the essential foundation of all his Lenten exercises. Nevertheless, he must remember that this *spiritual* penance would be a mere delusion,

were he not to practise mortification of the body. Let him study the example given him by his Saviour, Who grieves, indeed, and weeps over our sins; but He also expiates them by His bodily sufferings. Hence it is that the Church—the infallible interpreter of her Divine Master's will—tells us that the repentance of our heart will not be accepted by God, unless it be accompanied by fasting and abstinence.

Let, then, the children of the Church courageously observe the Lenten practices of penance. Peace of conscience is essential to Christian life; and yet it is promised to none but truly penitent souls. Lost innocence is to be regained by the humble confession of the sin, when it is accompanied by the absolution of the priest; but let the faithful be on their guard against the dangerous error, which would persuade them that they have nothing to do when once pardoned. Let them remember the solemn warning given them by the Holy Ghost in the Sacred Scriptures: "Be not without fear about sin forgiven" (Ecclus. v. 5). Our confidence of our having been forgiven should be in proportion to the change or conversion of our heart: the greater our present detestation of our past sins, and the more earnest our desire to do penance for them for the rest of our lives, the better founded is our confidence that they have been pardoned. "Man knoweth not," as the same holy volume assures us, "whether he be worthy of love or hatred" (Eccles. ix. 1); but he that keeps up within him the spirit of penance, has every reason to hope that God *loves* him.

But the courageous observance of the Church's precept of fasting and abstaining during Lent must be accompanied by those two other eminently good works, to which God so frequently urges us in the Scripture: *prayer* and

almsdeeds. Just as under the term *fasting* the Church comprises all kinds of mortification; so under the word *prayer* she includes all those exercises of piety whereby the soul holds intercourse with its God. More frequent attendance at the services of the Church, assisting daily at Mass, spiritual reading, meditation upon eternal truths and the Passion, hearing sermons, and, above all, the reception of the sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist—these are the chief means whereby the faithful should offer to God the homage of *prayer* during this holy season.

Let us remember the counsel given by the Archangel Raphael to Tobias. He was on the point of taking leave of his holy family, and returning to heaven; and these were his words: "Prayer is good with fasting and alms, more than to lay up treasures of gold: for alms delivereth from death, and the same is that which purgeth away sins, and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting" (Tob. xii. 8, 9). Equally strong is the recommendation given to this virtue by the Book of Ecclesiasticus: "Water quenqueth a flaming fire, and alms resisteth sins" (Ecclus. iii. 33). And again: "Shut up alms in the heart of the poor, and it shall obtain help for thee against all evil" (*Ibid.*, xxix. 15). The Christian should keep these consoling promises ever before his mind, but more especially during the season of Lent. The rich man should show the poor, whose whole year is a fast, that there is a time when even *he* has his self-imposed privations. The faithful observance of Lent naturally produces a saving; let that saving be given to Lazarus. Nothing, surely, could be more opposed to the spirit of this holy season than keeping up a table as rich and delicately provided, as at other periods of the year when God permits us to use all the comforts com-

patible with the means He has given us. But how thoroughly Christian is it, that during these days of penance and charity, the life of the poor man should be made more comfortable, in proportion as that of the rich shares in the hardships and privations of his suffering brother throughout the world! Poor and rich would then present themselves, with all the beauty of fraternal love upon them, at the Divine Banquet of the Paschal feast, to which our Risen Jesus will invite us after these forty days are over.

There is one means more whereby we are to secure to ourselves the great graces of Lent; it is the spirit of retirement and separation from the world. Our ordinary life, that is, such as it is during the rest of the year, should all be made to pay tribute to the holy season of penance; otherwise the salutary impression produced on us by the holy ceremony of Ash Wednesday will soon be effaced. The Christian ought, therefore, to forbid himself, during Lent, all the vain amusements, entertainments, and parties of the world he lives in. The world may rebel as much as it will against the sentence, but the sentence is irrevocable: "Unless ye do penance, ye shall all perish." It is God's Own word. Say, if you will, that few nowadays give ear to it; but for that very reason many are lost. They, too, who *hear* this word must not forget the warnings given them by our Divine Saviour Himself, in the Gospel read to us on Sexagesima Sunday. He told us how some of the seed is trodden down by the passers-by, or eaten by the fowls of the air; how some falls on rocky soil and gets parched; and how, again, some is choked by thorns. Let us be wise and spare no pains to become that good ground, which not only receives the divine seed, but brings forth a hundredfold for the Easter harvest.

ASH WEDNESDAY.

YESTERDAY the world was busy in its pleasures but this morning, all is changed. The solemn announcement, spoken of by the Prophet, has been proclaimed in Sion (see the Epistle of to-day's Mass) the solemn fast of Lent, the season of expiation, the approach of the great anniversaries of our Redemption. Let us, then, rouse ourselves, and prepare for the spiritual combat.

But, in this battling of the spirit against the flesh we need good armor. Our Holy Mother, the Church, knows how much we need it; and therefore does she summon us to enter into the House of God, that she may arm us for the holy contest. What this armor is we know from St. Paul, who thus describes it: "Have your loins girt about with Truth, and having on the Breastplate of Justice. And your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. In all things taking the Shield of Faith. Take unto you the Helmet of Salvation, and the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Eph. vi. 14-17). The very Prince of the Apostles, too, addresses these solemn words to us: "Christ having suffered in the flesh, be ye also armed with the same thought" (1 Peter iv. 1). We are entering to-day upon a long campaign of the warfare spoken of by the Apostles: forty days of battle—forty days of penance. We shall not turn cowards if our souls can but be impressed with the conviction, that the battle and the penance must be gone through.

Now and for all the days to come we are determined to persevere in loyalty to God, and in order to do so we must humble ourselves, accepting His word, "Thou art dust and into dust thou shalt return" (Gen. iii. 19),

and look on this present life as a path to the grave. The path may be long or short; but to the tomb it must lead us. Remembering this, we shall see all things in their true light. We shall love that God, Who has designed to set His heart on us, notwithstanding our being creatures of death: we shall hate, with deepest contrition, the insolence and ingratitude wherewith we have spent so many of our few days of life, that is, in sinning against our Heavenly Father: and we shall be not only willing, but eager to go through these days of penance, which He so mercifully gives us for making reparation to His offended justice.

THE Lesson is taken from the Book of the Prophet Joel (Ch. ii. 12-19):

“Thus saith the Lord, Be converted to Me with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning. And rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God; for He is gracious and merciful, patient and rich in mercy, and ready to repent of the evil. Who knoweth but He will return, and forgive and leave a blessing behind Him, sacrifice and libation to the Lord your God? Blow the trumpet in Sion: sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather together the people; sanctify the Church; assemble the ancients; gather together the little ones, and them that suck at the breasts; let the bridegroom go forth from his bed, and the bride out of her bride-chamber. Between the porch and the altar the priests, the Lord’s ministers, shall weep; and shall say, Spare, O Lord, spare Thy people; and give not thine inheritance to reproach, that the heathens should rule over them. Why should they say among the nations, Where is their God? The Lord hath been zealous for His land, and hath

spared His people. And the Lord answered, and said to His people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and you shall be filled with them; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations, saith the Lord Almighty."

We learn from this magnificent passage of the Prophet Joel, how acceptable to God is the expiation of fasting. When the penitent sinner inflicts corporal penance upon himself, God's justice is appeased. We have a proof of it in the Ninivites. If the Almighty pardoned an infidel city, as Ninive was, solely because its inhabitants sought for mercy under the garb of penance; what will He not do in favor of His Own people, who offer Him the two-fold sacrifice, exterior works of mortification and true contrition of heart? Let us, then, courageously enter on the path of penance. We are living in an age when, through want of faith and fear of God, those practices which are as ancient as Christianity itself, and on which we might almost say it was founded, are falling into disuse: it behooves us to be on our guard, lest we, too, should imbibe the false principles which have so fearfully weakened the Christian spirit. Let us never forget our own personal debt to the divine justice, which will remit neither our sins nor the punishment due to them, except inasmuch as we are ready to make satisfaction. We have just been told that these bodies, which we are so inclined to pamper, are but dust; and as to our souls, which we are so often tempted to sacrifice by indulging the flesh, they have claims upon the body, claims of both restitution and obedience.

The Holy Gospel is taken from that according to St. Matthew (Ch. vi. 16-21):

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples: When you fast, be not as the hypocrites, sad. For they disfigure

their faces, that they may appear to men to fast. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not to men to fast, but to thy Father, Who is in secret: and thy Father, Who seeth in secret, will reward thee. Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through, nor steal. For where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also."

Our Redeemer would not have us receive the announcement of the great fast as one of sadness and melancholy. The Christian who understands what a dangerous thing it is to be behindhand with divine justice, welcomes the season of Lent with joy; it consoles him. He knows that if he be faithful in observing what the Church prescribes, his debt will be less heavy upon him. These penances, these *satisfactions* (which the indulgence of the Church has rendered so easy), being offered to God unitedly with those of Our Saviour Himself, and being rendered fruitful by that holy fellowship which blends into one common propitiatory sacrifice the good works of all the members of the Church Militant, will purify our souls, and make them worthy to partake in the grand Easter joy. Let us not, then, be *sad* because we are to *fast*; let us be *sad* only because we have sinned and made fasting a necessity. In this same Gospel, Our Redeemer gives us a second counsel, which the Church will often bring before us during the whole course of Lent: it is that of joining almsdeeds with our fasting. He bids us *to lay up treasures in heaven*. For this, we need intercessors; let us seek them among the poor.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.

WE acknowledge ourselves to be sinners; we are engaged at this very time in doing penance for the sins we have committed; but how was it that we fell into sin? The devil tempted us; we did not reject the temptation; then we yielded to the suggestion, and the sin was committed. This is the history of our past; and such it would also be for the future were we not to profit by the lesson given us to-day by our Redeemer.

When the Apostle speaks of the wonderful mercy shown us by our Divine Saviour, Who vouchsafed to make Himself like to us in all things, save in sin, he justly lays stress on His *temptations* (Heb. iv. 15). He, Who was very God, humbled Himself even so low as this, to prove how tenderly He compassionated us. Here, then, we have the Saint of saints allowing the wicked spirit to approach Him, in order that we may learn from His example how we are to gain victory under temptation.

We have three enemies to fight against; our soul has three dangers; for as the Beloved Disciple says: "All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life" (1 John ii. 16). By the *concupiscence of the flesh* is meant the love of sensual things, which covets whatever is agreeable to the flesh, and, when not curbed, draws the soul into unlawful pleasures. *Concupiscence of the eyes* expresses the love of the goods of this world, such as riches and possessions; these dazzle the eye and then seduce the heart. *Pride of life* is that confidence in ourselves which leads us to be vain and presumptuous, and makes us forget that all that we have—our life and every good gift—we have from God, Our Saviour Who wish-

ing to be our Model in all things, designed to subject Himself to these three temptations.

First of all Satan tempts Him in what regards the *flesh*: he suggests to Him to satisfy the cravings of hunger by working a miracle, and changing the *stones* into bread. Secondly, he tempts Jesus to be proud: "Cast Thyself down; the angels shall bear Thee up in their hands." Satan then makes a last effort: he hopes to gain over by ambition Him Who has given such proofs of temperance and humility. He shows Him all the "kingdoms of the world and the glory of them;" and says to Him: "All these will I give Thee, if falling down, Thou wilt adore me." Jesus rejects the wretched offer, and drives from Him the seducer, "the prince of this world" (John xiv. 30).

Let us observe how it is that our Divine Model, our Redeemer, overcomes the tempter. Does He hearken to his words? Does He allow the temptation time, and give it strength by delay? We did so when we were tempted, and we fell. But Our Lord immediately meets each temptation with the shield of God's word. He says: "It is written: Not on bread alone doth man live. It is written: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. It is written: The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve." This then must be our practice for the time to come. We are now in a season of extraordinary grace; our hearts are on the watch, dangerous occasions are removed, everything that savors of worldliness is laid aside; our souls, purified by prayer, fasting and almsdeeds are to rise with Christ to a new life; but shall we persevere? All depends upon how we behave under temptation. Here at the very opening of Lent, the Church gives us this passage of the Holy Gospel that we may have not only precept but example. If we be

attentive and faithful the lesson she gives us will produce its fruit; and when we come to the Easter solemnity, we shall have those sure pledges of perseverance—vigilance, self-diffidence, prayer and the never failing help of divine grace.

THE Epistle is taken from that of St. Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians (2 Cor. vi. 1-10):

“Brethren, we exhort you that you receive not the grace of God in vain. For He saith: In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in the day of salvation have I helped thee. Behold now is the acceptable time: behold now is the day of salvation. Giving no offence to any man, that our ministry be not blamed: but in all things let us exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in tribulations, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in prisons, in seditions, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, in chastity, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in sweetness, in the Holy Ghost, in charity unfeigned, in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the armor of justice on the right hand, and the left: by honor and dishonor: by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true: as unknown, and yet known: as dying and behold we live: as chastised, and not killed: as sorrowful yet always rejoicing: as needy, yet enriching many: as having nothing, and possessing all things.”

These words of the Apostle give us a very different idea of the Christian life from that which our own tepidity suggests. We dare not say that he is wrong, and we are right; but we put a strange interpretation upon his words, and we tell both ourselves and those around us, that the advice he gives is not to be taken literally nowadays, and that it was written for those special diffi-

culties of the first age of the Church when the faithful stood in need of unusual detachment and almost heroism, because they were always in danger of persecution and death. The interpretation is full of that *discretion* which meets with the applause of our cowardice, and it easily persuades us to be at rest, just as though we had no dangers to fear and no battle to fight; whereas we have both. Let us learn from the temptations of our divine Master that "the life of man upon earth is a warfare" (Job vii. 1), and that, unless our fighting be truceless and brave, our life which we would fain pass in peace will witness our defeat.

The Holy Gospel is taken from that according to St. Matthew (Ch. iv. 1-11):

"At that time, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterwards hungry. And the tempter coming, said to Him: If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. And He answered and said: It is written, 'Not by bread alone doth man live, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' Then the devil took Him into the holy city, and set Him upon a pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him: If thou be the Son of God cast Thyself down: for it is written, 'He hath given His angels charge over Thee, and in their hands shall they bear Thee up lest perhaps Thou dash Thy foot against a stone.' Jesus said to him: It is written again, 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' Again the devil took Him up into a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said to Him: 'All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me.' Then Jesus said to him: Begone Satan, for it is written: 'The Lord thy

God shalt thou adore and Him only shalt thou serve.² Then the devil left Him; and angels came and ministered to Him.”

Let us admire the exceeding goodness of the Son of God, Who not satisfied with atoning for all our sins by dying on the Cross, deigns to suffer a fast of forty days and forty nights, in order to encourage us to do penance. He would not that the justice of His Heavenly Father should exact any punishment from us, unless He Himself first suffered it, and that too in a thousand times severer way than we could. What are all our penances—even were they done thoroughly—when we compare them with the severity of this fast of Jesus in the desert? Can we have the face to be ever seeking for dispensations from the little which Our Lord asks of us in atonement for our sins—sins, alas! which deserve such rigorous penance?

What was it that supported Him? Prayer, devotedness to us, and the knowledge of the exigencies of His Father's justice. And when the forty days were over, and His human nature was faint from exhaustion, He is assailed by temptations; but here again He thinks of us and sets us an example; He triumphs over temptation calmly, resolutely and thereby teaches us how to conquer. How blasphemous the boldness of Satan, who dares to tempt Him Who is *the Just* by excellence! But how divine is the patience of Jesus! The Christian soul is sometimes exposed to the vilest insults from this same enemy: nay, at times it is on the point of complaining to God for His permitting it to have such humiliations. Let it, on these occasions think upon Jesus, the Saint of saints, Who was given over, so to speak, to the wicked spirit; and yet He is none the less the Son of God, the Conquerer of hell.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.

THE subject offered to our consideration on this second Sunday, is one of the utmost importance for the holy season. The Church applies to us the lesson which Our Saviour gave to three of His Apostles. Let us endeavor to be more attentive to it than they were.

Jesus was about to pass from Galilee into Judea, that He might go up to Jerusalem and be present at the feast of the Pasch. It was that last Pasch which was to begin with the immolation of the figurative lamb, and end with the Sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sins of the world. Jesus would have His disciples not only know Him, but be faithful and loyal to Him even unto the end. Their Master was to be put to the severest test, and Jesus would mercifully forearm them by an extraordinary grace.

Jesus selects three out of the number who are especially dear to Him, Peter, James, the *son of Thunder*, and John, James' brother, and His Own Beloved Disciple. Jesus has resolved to take them aside and show them a glimpse of that glory which, until the day fixed for its manifestation, He conceals from the eyes of mortals.

He therefore leaves the rest of His disciples in the plain near Nazareth, and goes in company with the three privileged ones towards a high hill, called Thabor, which the Psalmist tells us was to "rejoice in the Name of the Lord" (Ps. lxxxviii. 13). No sooner has He reached the summit of the mountain than the three Apostles observe a sudden change come over Him; His face shines as the sun, and His humble garments become white as snow. They observe two venerable men approach and speak with Him. One is Moses, the Lawgiver; the other is Elias, the Prophet. These two great representatives of

the Jewish religion, the Law and the Prophets, humbly adore Jesus of Nazareth. The three Apostles are not only dazzled by the brightness which comes from their divine Master; but they are filled with such a rapture of delight that they cannot bear the thought of leaving the place. Peter proposes that they remain there forever, and build three tabernacles for Jesus, Moses and Elias. But suddenly a bright cloud overshadows them and the voice of the Eternal Father is heard proclaiming the Divinity of Jesus, and saying: "This is My beloved Son."

This Transfiguration of the Son of Man, this manifestation of glory, lasted but a few moments. When the three Apostles, who on hearing the voice from the cloud had fallen on their faces with fear, looked up they could see no one, only Jesus. The bright cloud was gone; Moses and Elias had disappeared. But what a favor had been bestowed upon them! Will they remember what they have seen and heard, and doubt not the Divinity of their Master, Jesus, even when they see Him suffer and die in ignominy. Alas! the Gospel has told us how they acted when the trial came.

We must not allow our faith to be weakened when we behold the fulfillment of those prophecies of David and Isaias, that the Messiah is to be treated as a "worm of the earth" (Ps. xxi.), and be covered with wounds so as to become like a "leper, the most abject of men," and the "Man of sorrows" (Is. liii. 3, 4). The more we see Him humbled, the more must we proclaim His glory and Divinity.

THE Epistle for this Sunday is taken from that of St. Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. iv. 1-7):

"Brethren, we pray and beseech you in the Lord

Jesus, that as you have received of us, how you ought to walk and to please God, so also you would walk that you may abound the more. For you know what precepts I have given to you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that you should abstain from fornication, that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles that know not God; and that no man over-reach, nor circumvent his brother in business; because the Lord is the avenger of all these things as we have told you before and have testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto sanctification: in Christ Jesus Our Lord.”

Here the Apostle shows what manner of life should be followed by Christians. A Christian is a *vessel of honor*, formed and enriched by the hand of God; let him, therefore, shun whatsoever would degrade his noble origin and turn him into a vessel of dishonor. The Christian Religion has so far ennobled man that even his very body may share in his soul's sanctity; on the other hand, she teaches us that this sanctity of the soul is impaired, yea altogether effaced, by the loss of the body's purity. The whole man, therefore, both body and soul, is to be reformed by the practices of this holy season. Let us purify the soul by the confession of our sins, by compunction of heart, by the love of God; and let us give back its dignity to the body by making it bear the yoke of penance, that so it may be henceforth subservient and docile to the soul, and on the day of the general resurrection partake in its endless bliss.

The Holy Gospel is taken from that according to St. Matthew (Ch. xvii. 1-9):

“At that time, Jesus taketh unto Him Peter and

James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart: and He was transfigured before them. And His face did shine as the sun: and His garments became as white as snow. And behold there appeared to them Moses and Elias talking with Him. Then Peter answering, said to Jesus: Lord it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses and one for Elias. And as he was speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them. And lo, a voice out of the cloud, saying: This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him. And the disciples hearing, fell upon their face and were very much afraid. And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one, but only Jesus. And as they came down the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying: Tell the vision to no man till the Son of Man shall be risen from the dead."

Thus did Jesus encourage His Apostles when the time of temptation was near; He sought to impress them with His glory that it might keep up their faith in that trying time when the outward eye would see nothing in His person but weakness and humiliation. Oh! the loving considerateness of divine grace which is never wanting and shows in so strong a light the goodness and the justice of our God! The fountain of this grace is never dried up; as long as we are in this world we may draw from this source which is the Precious Blood and merits of Our Redeemer. That grace is now urging us to amend our lives. It is offered to us in abundance during the present time. Let us go up the mountain with Jesus; there we shall not be disturbed by the noise of earthly things.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.

IF there be one season of the year more than another in which the faithful ought to reflect upon what is taught us both by faith and experience as to the existence and workings of the wicked spirits, it is undoubtedly this of Lent, when it is our duty to consider what have been the causes of our past sins, what are the spiritual dangers we have to fear for the future, and what means should be used in order to prevent our relapsing into sin?

Let us hearken to the passage from the Holy Gospel of St. Luke which Holy Church reads us to-day: "The devil possessed a man and the man could not speak. Before he was able to speak, Our Lord had first to cast the devil out of him."

To the devil it is sometimes granted to have power over our bodies. We ought to dread not only his possible power over our bodies, we ought to fear still more the influence he is striving to exercise over our souls. During this holy season, the Church places more than ever within our reach the great means of victory for salvation—prayer, fasting, almsdeeds. But even when the victory is gained, we must not deceive ourselves by thinking that we are absolutely secure. Our Saviour tells us that "when the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through places without water." This means that when the devil is driven from the soul, he still actually thirsts for the soul's destruction. He will endeavor to return—"I will return into my house whence I came out." He will call upon other spirits to help him, and "take with him seven other spirits even more wicked than himself." The soul that is only "swept and garnished" will not be able to resist this

onslaught of temptation. The soul must for its own safety be ever on the watch and well armed. Unless it be so the wicked spirits "entering in will dwell there so that the last state of that man is worse than the first." Let us ever remember, therefore, that our whole life must be a ceaseless warfare.

THE Epistle is taken from that of St. Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians (Ch. v. 1-9):

"Brethren, be ye followers of God as most dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us and hath delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God, for an odor of sweetness. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints; or obscenity, or foolish talking, or scurrility, which is to no purpose: but rather giving of thanks. For know ye this and understand, that no fornicator or unclean, or covetous person, which is serving of idols, hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the anger of God upon the children of unbelief. Be ye not, therefore, partakers with them. For you were heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord. Walk ye as children of the light: for the fruit of the light is in all goodness, and justice and truth."

The Apostle speaking to the faithful at Ephesus reminds them how they were once *darkness*; but *now*, he says, "ye are light in the Lord." We were sanctified almost as soon as we came into the world; have we been faithful to our baptism? "We were Light." Are we Light now? The beautiful likeness to Our Heavenly Father, which was once ours, do we still possess it or

have we lost it? If the latter, we may, thanks to divine mercy, recover it. Let our repentance and penance restore within us that *Light* whose *fruit* consists in *all goodness, justice and truth*.

The Holy Gospel is taken from that according to St. Luke (Ch. xi. 14-28):

“At that time, Jesus was casting out a devil, and the same was dumb. And when He had cast out the devil, the dumb spoke, and the multitude were in admiration at it. But some of them said: He casteth out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils. And others tempting, asked of Him a sign from heaven. But He seeing their thoughts, said to them: Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation, and house upon house shall fall. And if Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because you say that through Beelzebub I cast out devils. Now if I cast out devils by Beelzebub, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore, they shall be your judges. But if I by the finger of God cast out devils, doubtless the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man keepeth his court, those things are in peace which he possesseth. But if a stronger than he come upon him and overcome him, he will take away all his armor wherein he trusted, and will distribute his spoils. He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth. When the unclean spirit is gone out of man, he walketh through places without water seeking rest; and not finding, he saith: I will return into my house whence I came out. And when he is come, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and entering they dwell there; and the last state of that man cometh worse

than the first. And it came to pass, as He spoke these things, a certain woman from the crowd, lifting up her voice, said to Him: "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee and the paps that gave Thee suck. But He said: Yea, rather blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it."

As soon as Jesus had cast out the devil, the man recovered his speech, for the *possession* had made him dumb. It is an image of what happens to a sinner who will not, or dare not, confess his sin. If he confessed it, and asked pardon, he would be delivered from the tyranny which now oppresses him. Alas! how many there are who are kept back, by a *dumb devil*, from making the confession that would save them! The holy season of Lent is advancing; these days of grace are passing away. Let us offer up our earnest prayers for sinners that they may *speak*, that is, may accuse themselves in confession and obtain pardon.

Let us meditate also upon those other words of Our Lord in to-day's Gospel: "He that is not with Me is against Me." What makes us fall back into the power of Satan, and forget our duty to our God, is that we do not frankly declare ourselves for Jesus when occasions require us to do so. We try to be on both sides, we have recourse to subterfuge, we temporize: this takes away our energy; God no longer gives us the abundant graces we received when we were loyal and generous; our relapse is all but certain. Therefore, let us be boldly and unmistakably *with* Christ. He that is a soldier of Christ, should be proud of his title.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT.

THIS Sunday, called from the first word of the Introit, *Lætare* (Rejoice) Sunday, is one of the most solemn of the year. The Church interrupts her Lenten mournfulness; the chants of the Mass speak of nothing but joy and consolation. The Church's motive for introducing this expression of joy in to-day's Liturgy is to encourage her children to persevere to the end of this holy season. She not only permits, but even bids her children to *rejoice*. Another name given to the Fourth Sunday of Lent was suggested by the Gospel of the day. We find this Sunday called in several ancient documents *the Sunday of the Five Loaves*. This miracle is also an additional element of to-day's joy. It recalls to us the greatest of the benefits He has bestowed upon us; for under the figure of these loaves, multiplied by the power of Jesus, our faith sees that "Bread which cometh down from heaven and giveth life to the world" (John vi. 33). Before leaving this world to go to His Father, Jesus desires to feed the multitude that follows Him; and in order to do this He displays His omnipotence. Well may we admire that creative power which feeds five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes, and in such wise that even after all have partaken of the feast *as much as they would*, there remain fragments enough to fill twelve baskets. Such a miracle is, indeed, an evident proof of Christ's mission; but He intends it as a preparation for something far more wonderful; He intends it as a figure and a pledge of what He is soon to do, not merely once or twice, but every day even to the end of time; not only for five thousand men, but for the countless multitude of believers. We are to feast as did our fathers before us; and the generations that are

to follow us shall be invited, as we now are, to come and taste how sweet is the Lord (Ps. xxxiii. 9).

THE Epistle is taken from that of St. Paul the Apostle to the Galatians (Ch. iv. 22-31):

“Brethren, it is written that Abraham had two sons; the one by a bond-woman, and the other by a free-woman. But he who was of the bond-woman, was born according to the flesh; but he by the free-woman, was by promise. Which things are said by an allegory. For these are the two testaments. The one from Mount Sina engendering unto bondage, which is Agar; for Sina is a mountain in Arabia which hath affinity to that Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But that Jerusalem which is above, is free; which is our mother. For it is written: Rejoice, thou barren, that bearest not; break forth and cry thou that travailest not; for many are the children of the desolate, more than of her that hath a husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then, he that was born according to the flesh, persecuted him that was after the spirit, so also now. But what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bond-woman and her son; for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free; by the freedom wherewith Christ hath made us free.”

Let us, then *rejoice!* we are children, not of Sina, but of Jerusalem. Our Mother, the Holy Church, is not a *bond-woman*, but *free*; and it is unto freedom that she has brought us up. We serve God through love; our yoke is sweet, and our burden is light (Matt. xi. 30). We are not citizens of the earth; we are but pilgrims

passing through it to our true country, the *Jerusalem which is above*. Now is the favorable time; now are the days of salvation: we have obeyed the Church's call, and have entered in to the practice and spirit of Lent. We begin to breathe the fresh air of holy liberty. Let us, with all possible affection, thank our divine Liberator, Who delivers us from the bondage of Agar, emancipates us from the law of fear, and making us His new people, opens to us, at the price of His blood, the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem.

The Holy Gospel is taken from that according to St. John (Ch. vi. 1-15):

"At that time, Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is that of Tiberias; and a great multitude followed Him, because they saw the miracles He did on them: that were diseased. Jesus therefore went up into a mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. Now the Pasch, the festival day of the Jews, was near at hand. When Jesus therefore had lifted up His eyes and seen that a very great multitude cometh to Him, He said to Philip: Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat? and this He said to try him, for He Himself knew what He would do. Philip answered Him: Two hundred penny-worth of bread is not sufficient for them that every one may take a little. One of His disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, saith to Him: There is a boy here that hath five barley loaves and two fishes; but what are they among so many? Then Jesus said: Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. The men therefore sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks, He distributed to them that were sat down. In like manner also of the fishes, as much as they would; and when they were filled, He

said to His disciples: Gather up the fragments that remain lest they be lost. They gathered up therefore and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which remained over and above to them that had eaten. Now these men when they had seen what a miracle Jesus had done, said: This is of a truth the Prophet that is to come into the world. Jesus therefore, when He knew that they would come to take Him by force and make Him king, fled again into the mountain Himself alone."

These men, whom Jesus has been feeding by a miracle of love and power, are resolved to make Him their *King*. What, then, shall we Christians do, who know the goodness and power of Jesus incomparably better than these poor Jews? We must beseech Him to reign over us from this day forward. We have just been reading in the Epistle that it is He Who has made us free by delivering us from our enemies. O glorious liberty! But the only way to maintain it is to live under His law. Jesus is not a tyrant, as are the world and the flesh; His rule is sweet and peaceful, and we are His children rather than His servants. In the court of such a King "to serve is to reign." What then have we to do with our old slavery? If some of its chains be still upon us, let us lose no time, let us break them, for *the Pasch is near at hand*; the great feast-day begins to dawn. Onwards then courageously to the end of our journey! Jesus will refresh us; He will make us *sit down* as He did the men of the Gospel; and the Bread He has in store for us will make us forget all our past fatigues.

PASSION SUNDAY.

“**T**O-DAY if you shall hear the voice of the Lord, harden not your hearts.”

The Holy Church begins her Night Office of this Sunday with these impressive words of the royal Psalmist. The sweet voice of our suffering Jesus now speaks to us sinners. The Son of God is about to give us the last and greatest proof of the love that brought Him down from heaven; His death is nigh at hand. Let us enter into ourselves; let not our hearts, after being touched with grace, return to their former obduracy, for nothing could be more dangerous. The great anniversaries we are to celebrate have a renovating power for those souls that faithfully correspond with the grace which is offered them; but increase insensibility in those who let them pass without working their conversion. *To-day, therefore, if you hear the voice of the Lord, harden not your hearts!*

During the preceding four weeks we have noticed how the malice of Christ's enemies has been gradually increasing. His very presence irritates them; and it is evident that any little circumstance will suffice to bring the deep and long-nurtured hatred to a head. The kind and gentle manners of Jesus are drawing to Him all hearts that are simple and upright; at the same time, the humble life He leads and the stern purity of His doctrines, are perpetual sources of vexation and anger, both to the proud Jew that looks forward to the Messiah being a mighty conqueror, and to the Pharisee, who corrupts the Law of God that he may make it the instrument of his own base passions. Still Jesus continues to work His miracles; His discourses are more than ever energetic, His prophecies foretell the fall of Jerusalem, and

such a destruction of the famous Temple that not a stone is to be left on a stone. The Doctors of the Law should at least reflect upon what they hear. But there is not a single outrage or suffering foretold by David and Isaias, as having to be put upon the Messiah, which these blind men are not scheming to verify. In them, therefore, was fulfilled that terrible saying: "He that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come." The Synagogue is nigh to a curse. Obstinate in her error, she has deliberately extinguished within herself the light of the Holy Spirit; she will go deeper and deeper into evil, and at length fall into the abyss. This same lamentable conduct is but too often witnessed nowadays. Neither should it surprise us that we find in people of our own generation a resemblance to the murderers of our Jesus: the history of His Passion will reveal to us many sad secrets of the human heart and its perverse inclinations; for what happened in Jerusalem, happens also in every sinner's heart. His heart, according to the saying of St. Paul, is a Calvary where Jesus is crucified.

THE Epistle is taken from that of St. Paul to the Hebrews (Ch. ix. 11-15):

"Brethren, Christ being come, an High Priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, neither by the blood of goats or of calves, but by His Own Blood, entered into the Holies, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and of oxen, and the ashes of an heifer being sprinkled sanctify such as are the defiled, to the cleansing of the flesh; how much more shall the Blood of Christ, Who by the Holy Ghost offered Himself unspotted unto God, cleanse

our conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And therefore, He is the Mediator of the New Testament; that by means of His death, for the redemption of those transgressions which were under the former testament, they that are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

In Jesus is fulfilled the most sacred of the figures of the Old Law. Once each year the high priest entered into the Holy of Holies there to make intercession for the people. He went within the Veil even to the Ark of the Covenant; but he was not allowed to enjoy this great privilege unless he entered the holy place carrying in his hands the blood of a newly-offered victim. The Son of God, the true High Priest, is now about to enter heaven, and we are to follow Him hither; but for this, He must have an offering of blood, and that Blood can be none other than His Own. We are going to assist at this His compliance with the divine ordinance. Let us open our heart, that this precious Blood may, as the Apostle says in to-day's Epistle, "cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God."

The Holy Gospel is taken from that according to St. John (Ch. viii. 46-59):

"At that time, Jesus said to the multitudes of the Jews, Which of you shall convince Me of sin? If I say the truth to you, why do you not believe Me? He that is of God, heareth the words of God. Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God. The Jews therefore answered, and said to him, Do not we say well, that Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honor My Father, and you have dishonored Me. But I seek not My Own glory; there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Amen, amen, I say to you, if any man keep My word, he shall,

not see death for ever. The Jews therefore said, Now we know that Thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and Thou sayest, If any man keep My word, he shall not taste death for ever. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? and the prophets are dead. Whom dost Thou make Thyself? Jesus answered, If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing. It is My Father that glorifieth Me, of Whom you say that He is your God, And you have not known Him; but I know Him. And if I shall say that I know Him not, I shall be like to you a liar. But I do know Him, and do keep His word. Abraham your father rejoiced that he might see My day; he saw it, and was glad. The Jews therefore said to Him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham? Jesus said to them, Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am. They took up stones therefore to cast at Him: but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple."

The fury of the Jews is evidently at its height, and Jesus is obliged to hide himself from them. But He is to fall into their hands before many days are over; then will they triumph and put Him to death. Yet there was a time when they were of God, for the Lord gives His grace to all men; but they have rendered this grace useless; they are now in darkness, and the light they have rejected will not return. The true Lamb is to be sacrificed by their hands, and they will not know Him. He will shed His Blood for them, but they will not permit it to save them.

PALM SUNDAY.

EARLY in the morning of this day, Jesus sets out for Jerusalem, leaving Mary, His Mother, and the two sisters, Martha and Mary, and Lazarus, at Bethany. The Mother of Sorrows trembles at seeing her Son thus expose Himself to danger, for His enemies are bent upon His destruction; but it is not Death, it is Triumph, that Jesus is to meet with to-day in Jerusalem. He is to be proclaimed *King* by the people of the great city; and its streets are to reëcho with *Hosannas* to the Son of David.

The disciples spread their garments upon the colt; and Our Saviour, that the prophetic figure might be fulfilled, sat upon him (Mark xi. 7; Luke xix. 35), and advanced towards Jerusalem. As soon as it was known that Jesus was near the city, many went out to meet Him, holding palm branches in their hands, and loudly proclaiming him to be King (Luke xix. 38). They that had accompanied Jesus from Bethany, joined the enthusiastic crowd. Whilst some spread their garments on the way, others cut down boughs from the palm trees, and strewed them along the road. The triumphant cry of *Hosanna*, proclaimed to the whole city that Jesus, *the Son of David*, had made His entrance as her King. Thus did God, in His power over men's hearts, procure a triumph for His Son, and in the very city, which, a few days after, was to clamor for His Blood. This day was one of glory for Jesus Christ, and Holy Church would have us renew each year the memory of this triumph of the God-Man. Shortly after the birth of our Emmanuel, we saw the Magi coming from the East, and looking in Jerusalem for the *King of the Jews*, but it is Jerusalem herself that now goes forth to meet this *King*. Each of these events

is an acknowledgment of the Kingship of Jesus; the first, from the Gentiles; the second, from the Jews. The inscription to be put upon the Cross, by Pilate's order, will repeat this tribute: *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews*. To-day, the Jews themselves proclaim Jesus to be their *King*; they will soon be dispersed, in punishment for their revolt against the Son of David; but Jesus is King, and will be so forever.

This is the glorious mystery which ushers in the Great Week, the Week of Sorrows. Holy Church would have us give this momentary consolation to our heart, and hail our Jesus as our *King*. She has so arranged the service of to-day that it should express both joy and sorrow; joy, by uniting herself with the loyal Hosannas of the city of David; and sorrow, by sharing the Passion of her Divine Spouse.

THE Epistle of the Mass is taken from that of St. Paul to the Philippians (Ch. ii. 5-11):

“Brethren, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above all names: that in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.”

In obedience to the wishes of the Church we knelt at those words of the Apostle where he says that every knee should bow at the Holy Name of Jesus. If there

be one time of the year rather than another, when the Son of God has a right to our fervent adorations, it is this week, when we see Him in His Passion. Not only should His sufferings excite us to tender compassion; we should also keenly resent the insults that are heaped upon Him, Our Saviour and the God of infinite majesty. Let us strive, by our humble homage, to make Him amends for the indignities He suffered in atonement for our pride.

Let us unite with the holy Angels, who, witnessing what He has endured for love of man, prostrate themselves, in profound adoration, at the sight of His humiliations.

The Holy Gospel for the Blessing of the Palms is taken from that according to St. Matthew (Ch. xxi. 1-9):

“At that time, when Jesus drew nigh to Jerusalem, and was come to Bethphage, unto Mount Olivet, He sent two disciples, saying to them, Go ye into the village that is over against you, and immediately you shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her; loose them, and bring them to Me. And if any man shall say anything to you, say ye that the Lord hath need of them; and forthwith he will let them go. Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of her that is used to the yoke. And the disciples going, did as Jesus commanded them; and they brought the ass and the colt, and laid their garments upon them, and made Him sit thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; and others cut boughs from the trees, and strewed them in the way: and the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to

the son of David! blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

The sacred historian tells us, that Jesus, immediately upon His entrance into the city, went to the Temple, and cast out all them that sold and bought there (Matt. xxi. 12). This was the second time that He had shown authority in His Father's House, and no one had dared to resist Him. The chief priests and Pharisees found fault with Him, and accused Him of causing confusion by His entry into the city; but Our Lord confounded them by the reply He made. It is thus, that in after ages, when it has pleased God to glorify His Son and the Church of His Son, the enemies of both have given vent to their rage; they protested against the triumph, but they could not stop it. But, when God, in the unsearchable ways of His wisdom, allowed persecution and trial to follow these periods of triumph, then did these bitter enemies redouble their efforts to induce those very people, who once cried *Hosanna to the Son of David*, to demand that He be delivered up and crucified.

We learn from St. Matthew (Matt. xxi. 17), that Our Saviour spent the close of this day at Bethany. It had brought to Him a great public triumph; before all the populace He had been proclaimed King—yet in humility and lowliness, when it was all over, He returned to His Own.

MAUNDY THURSDAY.

THIS is the first day of the *Azymes*, or *Feast of the Unleavened Bread*. At sunset, the Jews must eat the *Pasch* in Jerusalem. Jesus is still in Bethany; but He will return to the city before the hour for the Paschal Supper. He therefore sends two of His disciples, Peter and John, to get everything ready for the Pasch.

Jesus tells them by what sign they are to know the house which He intends to honor with His presence. The two Apostles apprise the owner of their Master's wishes; and he immediately puts at their disposal a large and richly furnished room.

Jesus is in the supper chamber, where the Paschal Lamb is to be eaten. All the Apostles are with Him. At the beginning of the repast, Jesus speaks these words to His Apostles: "With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you, before I suffer" (Luke xxii. 15).

The legal feast being over, a second feast follows, which again brings the disciples around their Divine Master. And as soon as the second repast was over, Jesus suddenly rises, and, to the astonishment of His Apostles, takes off His upper garment, girds Himself, as a servant, with a towel, pours water into a basin, and prepares to wash the feet of the guests. It was the custom to wash one's feet before taking part in a feast; it was considered as the very extreme of hospitality when the master of the house himself did this service to his guest. Jesus would teach us, by what He is now doing, how great is the purity, wherewith we should approach the Holy Table. "He that is washed," says He, "needeth not but to wash his feet" (John xiii. 10); as though He would say: "The holiness of this Table is such that they who come to it, should not only be free from grievous sins, but they

should, moreover, strive to cleanse their souls from all lesser faults."

Then taking a piece of the unleavened bread, He raises His eyes to heaven, blesses the bread, breaks it, and distributes it to His disciples, saying to them: "Take ye, and eat; this is my Body" (Matt. xxvi. 26). The Apostles take the bread, which is now changed into the Body of their Divine Master: they eat—and Jesus is, now, not only with them, but in them. But, as this sacred mystery is not only the most holy of the sacraments, but, moreover, a true Sacrifice; our Jesus takes the cup, and changing the wine into His Own Blood, He passes it to His disciples, saying to them: "Drink ye, all, of this; for this is My Blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many, unto remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 27, 28). The Apostles drink from the sacred chalice thus proffered them. When it comes to Judas, he too partakes of it, but he drinks his own damnation, as he ate his own *judgment*, when he received the Bread of Life (1 Cor. xi. 29). Jesus, however, mercifully offers the traitor another grace, by saying, as He gives the Cup to His disciples: "The hand that betrayeth Me is with Me on the table" (Luke xxii. 21).

The institution of the Holy Eucharist, both as a *Sacrament* and *Sacrifice*, is followed by another, the institution of a new *Priesthood*. How could Our Saviour have said: "Except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you" (John vi. 54), unless He had resolved to establish a ministry upon earth, whereby He would renew, even to the end of time, the great Mystery He thus commands us to receive? He begins it to-day, in the Cenacle. The Twelve Apostles are the first to partake of it: but observe what He says to them: "Do this for a commemoration of

Me" (Luke xxii. 19). By these words He gives them power to change bread into His Body, and wine into His Blood; and this sublime power shall be perpetuated in the Church, by holy ordination, even to the end of the world. Jesus will continue to operate, by the ministry of mortal and sinful men, the Mystery of the Last Supper. By thus enriching His Church with the one and perpetual Sacrifice, He also gives us the means of *abiding in Him*; for He gives, us, as He promised, the *Bread of heaven*. To-day, then, we keep the anniversary, not only of the institution of the Holy Eucharist, but, also, of the equally wonderful institution of the *Christian Priesthood*.

Jesus, after having provided for the future of His Church by the words He addressed to Peter, thus speaks affectionately to all the eleven: "Little children! yet a little while I am with you.....Love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another. Peter says to Him: Lord; whither goest Thou? Whither I go, answers Jesus, thou canst not now follow Me; but thou shalt follow hereafter. Why cannot I follow thee now? again asks Peter: I will lay down my life for Thee. Wilt thou, replies Jesus, lay down thy life for Me? Amen, amen, I say to thee: the cock shall not crow, till thou deny me thrice" (John xiii. 33-38). Peter's love for Jesus had too much of the human about it, for it was not based on humility.

He continues His instructions as they go along to Mount Olivet. He takes occasion from their passing by a vine to speak of the effect produced by divine grace in the soul of man. "I am the true vine," He says, "and My Father is the Husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit, He will take away, and every one that beareth fruit, He will purge it, that it may bring forth

more fruit. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine; so neither can you, unless you abide in Me."

He next speaks to them of the persecutions that await them, and of the hatred the world will have of them.

Such are the outpourings of the loving Heart of our Jesus, as He crosses the Brook of Cedron, and ascends, with His Disciples, the Mount of Olives. Having come as far as Gethsemani, He goes into a garden, whither He had often led His Apostles, and rested there with them. Suddenly His soul is overpowered with grief. Such intense sadness seizes Him that the very presence of His disciples is insupportable. Grief lays Him on the ground and He prays. The power of the Divinity, which is in Him, supports Him: but it does not prevent Him from feeling every suffering, just as though He had been mere Man. Thrice He begs that the chalice of suffering and shame be taken from Him; but He ends by saying to His Father: "Not My will, but Thine be done!" (Luke xxii. 42.)

Jesus then rises, leaving the earth covered with the Blood of His Agony—it is the first bloodshedding of His Passion. He finds His disciples again asleep. This time He speaks to them, saying: "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" (Matt. xxvi. 45). Then resuming the energy of His divine courage, He adds: "Rise! let us go! Behold, he is at hand that will betray Me!" (Matt. xxvi. 46.)

GOOD FRIDAY.

THE priest and scribes did not wait for the coming of day to vent their rage upon Jesus. Annas, the first to receive the Divine Captive took Him to Caiaphas, the high priest. In the presence of Caiaphas, Jesus is many times insulted. The Son of God came down from heaven in order to restore man to life, and yet here this creature of death dares to summon the Divine Benefactor before him and condemns Him to death. Jesus bears willingly with these ungrateful blasphemers. Well may we exclaim in the words with which the Greek liturgy frequently interprets to-day's reading of the Passion. "Glory be to Thy patience, O Lord."

The disciple, Peter, who has made his way to the court of the high priest's palace, is charged with being one of His disciples. Peter at once emphatically denies His Master. Jesus casts upon him one look of reproach and pardon, and Peter immediately repents of his sin with bitter tears. From this hour forward he can do nothing but lament his sin; and it is only on Easter morning, when the Risen Jesus shall appear to him, that he will permit any consolation to enter his afflicted heart.

The chief priests, taking Jesus with them, present themselves at the governor's palace, demanding audience. Pilate comes forward and asks them: "What accusation bring ye against this Man?" They answered: "If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up to thee." It is very evident from these first words that Pilate has a contempt for these Jewish priests; it is not less evident that they are determined to gain their cause. "Take Him you," says Pilate, "and judge according to your Law." The chief priests answered: "It is not lawful for us to put any man to

death" (John xviii. 29, 30, 31). "Whom will you that I release to you?" says Pilate; "Barabbas, or Jesus, that is called Christ?" He has not long to wait for the answer: the crowd exclaim: "Not this Man, but Barabbas!" "What then," replied Pilate, "shall I do with Jesus, that is called the Christ?" "Crucify Him." "Why, what evil hath He done?" asks Pilate; and then in order to appease the Jews in some measure, he adds: "I will chastise Him, therefore, and let Him go." But they, growing irritated at this, cry out so much louder: "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" (Matt. xxvii.; Luke xxiii.; John xviii.)

Pilate, however, hands over Jesus to the soldiers to be scourged. They rudely strip Him of His garments, and tie Him to a pillar. Fiercely do they strike Him; the blood flows down His sacred body. Let us adore the second bloodshedding of our Jesus, whereby He expiates for the sins we and the whole world have committed by the flesh.

Thus mangled and bleeding, holding the reed in His hand, and with the scarlet tatters on His shoulders, Jesus is led back to Pilate. Such a pitiable sight will surely soften the hearts even of these hardened people; at least Pilate thinks so; and leading Jesus to the balcony of the palace, he shows Him to the crowd below, saying: "Behold the Man!" (John xix. 5.) Little did Pilate know all that these few words conveyed! He says not: "Behold Jesus!" nor, "Behold the King of the Jews!" he says: "Behold the Man!" Man! the Christian understands the full force of the word thus applied to Our Redeemer. Adam, the first man, rebelled against God, and, by his sin, brought disorder to the whole work of the Creator: as a punishment for his pride and intemperance, the flesh tyrannized over the spirit; the very

earth was cursed, and thorns were to be its growth. Jesus, the New Man, comes into this world, bearing upon Him, not the reality, but the appearance, the likeness, of sin; in Him, the work of the Creator regains its primeval order; but the change was not wrought without violence. To teach us, that the flesh must be brought into subjection to the spirit, Christ's flesh was torn by the scourges; to teach us that pride must give way to humility, the only crown that Jesus wears is made of thorns. Yes—"Behold the Man"—the triumph of the spirit over the flesh, the triumph of humility over pride.

Like the tiger that grows fiercer as he sees blood, so is Israel at the sight of Jesus after His scourging. "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" the cry is still the same. "Take Him you," says Pilate, "and crucify Him; for I find no cause in Him."

Pilate seeing that nothing can quell the tumult, and that his honor as governor is at stake, decides to give Jesus over to His enemies. Though against his own inclination, he passes the fatal sentence. He takes a tablet, and with a stylus, writes the Inscription which is to be fastened to the Cross. The people demand that two thieves should be crucified at the same time—it would be an additional insult to Jesus: this, too, he grants, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaias: "And with the wicked was He reputed" (Is. liii. 12). Having thus defiled his soul with the most heinous of crimes, Pilate washes his hands before the people, and says to them: "I am innocent of the blood of this just Man; look ye to it!" They answer him with this terrible self-imprecation: "His blood be upon us and upon our children" (Matt. xxvii. 24, 25).

And now begins that long "Way of the Cross." At its end is the hill of death. Calvary is steep; but it is

the place of Christ's Sacrifice. He begins the ascent, but falls a third time. A third time the soldiers force Jesus to rise and continue His painful journey to the summit, which is to serve as the Altar for the Holocaust that is to surpass all others in holiness and power. The executioners seize the Cross and lay it upon the ground, preparatory to nailing the Divine Victim upon it. The moment is at length come when Jesus is to yield up His soul to His Father. This Man, worn out by suffering, exhausted by His three hours' agony, Whose few words were scarce audible to them that stood round His Cross, now utters a loud cry, which is heard at a great distance, and which fills the Centurion, and all the soldiers who stand about, with fear and astonishment: "Father! into Thy hands I commend My spirit!" (Luke xxiii. 46.) This is His seventh and last word; after uttering it, He bows His head and dies. O Jesus! Son of the Eternal Father we adore Thee now lying dead on the wood of Thy Sacrifice. Thy bitter Death has given us Life. Like those Jews who saw Thee expire, and returned to Jerusalem, striking their breasts, we also confess that it is our sins that have caused Thy death. Thou hast loved us, as none but God could love. Henceforth, we must be Thine, and serve Thee as creatures redeemed at the infinite price of Thy Blood. Thou art our God; we are Thy people. We adore Thy sacred Body, Thy precious Blood, and Thy holy Cross that have brought us salvation.

HOLY SATURDAY.

A NIGHT has passed over the tomb, wherein lies buried the Body of the Man-God. Death is triumphant in that silent cave, and holds captive Him Who gives life to every creature: but his triumph will soon be at an end. The soldiers may watch; as best they will, over that grave: they cannot hold Jesus prisoner when the moment appointed for His Resurrection comes. The holy angels are there, profoundly adoring the lifeless Body of Him, Whose Blood is to "reconcile all things both on earth and in heaven" (Colos. i. 20).

Let us also return to the sepulchre, and adore the Body of our buried Jesus. Now, at last, we understand what sin has done: "By sin, death entered into the world; and it passed upon all men" (Rom. v. 12). Though Jesus "knew no sin" (2 Cor. v. 21), yet has He permitted death to have dominion over Him, in order that He might make it less bitter to us, and by His Resurrection restore unto us that eternal life of which we have been deprived by sin. How gratefully we should appreciate this death of our Jesus! By becoming Incarnate, He became a "servant" (Philip. ii. 7); by enduring death He submitted to a still deeper humiliation. The sight of the tomb wherein lies His Body lifeless and cold, teaches us something far more important than the power of death: it reveals to us the immense, incomprehensible love of God for man. Jesus knew that we were to gain by His humiliations: the greater His humiliations, the greater our exaltation: this was His principle, and it led Him to what seems like excess! Let us, then, love this sacred sepulchre, which is to give us Life. We have thanked Him for having died for us upon the Cross; let

us thank Him, but most feelingly, for having humbled Himself, for our sakes, even to the tomb.

But now, dearest Jesus, it is time for Thee to rise from Thy tomb, and re-unite Thy soul to Thy body; heaven and earth await Thy Resurrection. The Church, Thy Bride, has already sung the *Alleluia* of her glad expectation. Rise, then, from Thy grave, O Jesus, our Life! Triumph over death, and reign, our King forever!

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