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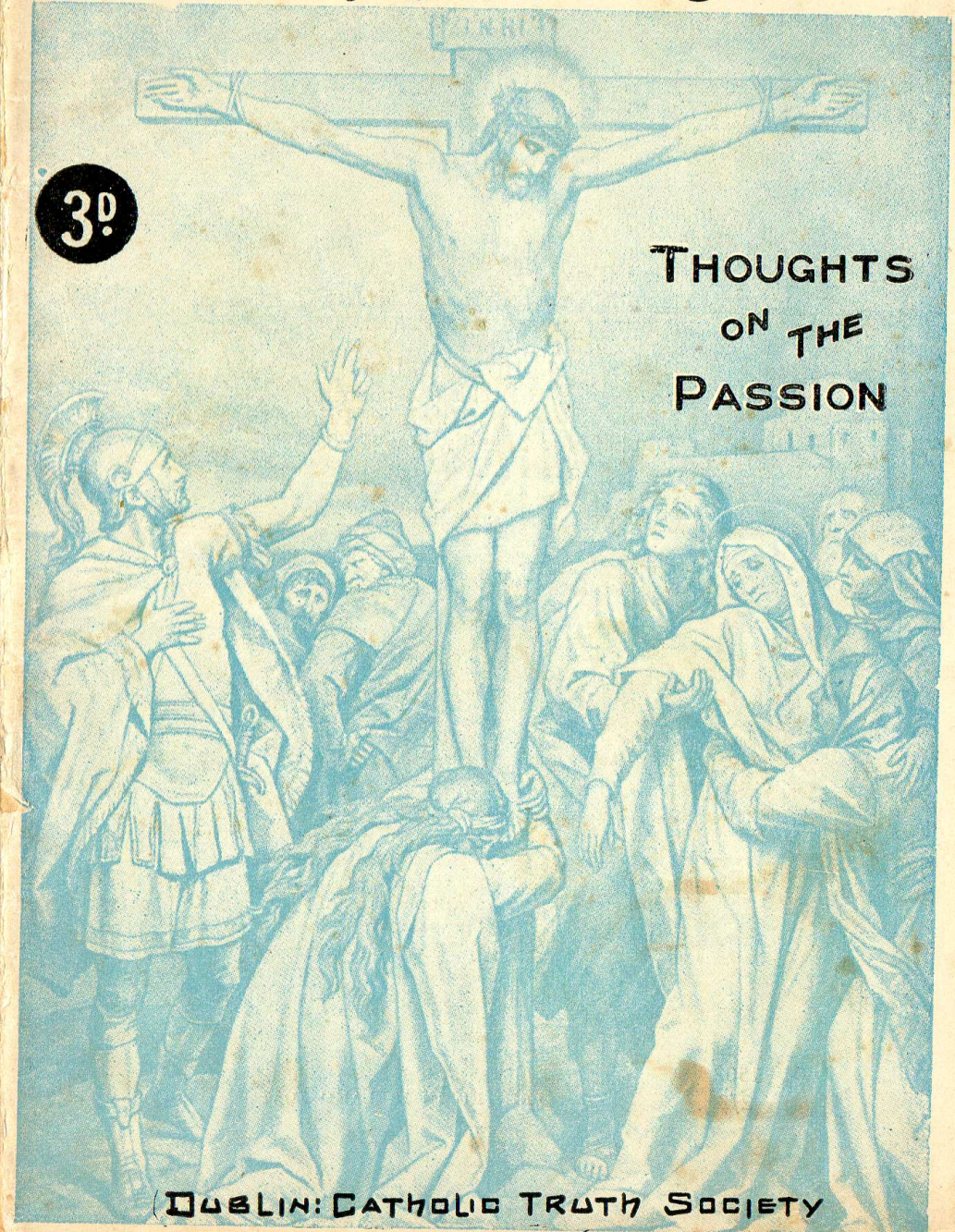
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WITH CHRIST'S MOTHER AT THE CROSS



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WITH CHRIST'S MOTHER AT THE CROSS*

OF MEDITATION ON THE PASSION OF CHRIST.

COME, ye peoples, from all parts, and admire the charity of God towards you, and wonder at your own blindness, and your malice towards Him! For if the Son of God willed to be inseparably united to human nature, how much more should your soul desire to be indissolubly bound to Him! If the Son of God willed, with such fervour of charity, to unite to Himself such vile ashes as we are, how much the more eagerly should each one of us open his heart to receive Him most devoutly! What madness it is for the soul to neglect this, and prefer to adhere to earth!

For the Son of Man did not take flesh in order that man might live according to the flesh. But as He Himself, clothed in our flesh, afflicted His Body, and condemned all carnal things, while His soul ever adhered to God, so should man mortify his flesh, and be continually uplifting himself to what is Divine. O marvellous blindness of man, who being made up of body and soul, and the soul being incomparably better and nobler than the body, yet spends all his time providing for the flesh or in something pertaining to it! And he neglects his soul as though it were of no account, nor does he strive to nourish it, nor to rest it in its supreme Creator!

And yet this would be easy, sweet and delightful, and incomparably more profitable. For everywhere and in all things, God offers Himself to man, and asks of him nothing in return, but the memory of the Death of His Son. For

*From the Latin of *Stimuli Divini Amoris*, attributed to St. Bonaventure, but really by James of Milan, a 13th century writer, done into English by Sister Mary Emmanuel, O.S.B. See also DD. 722, "The Goads of Divine Love."

the goods of the body always elude us, nor can they be fully possessed in this world, without continual solicitude, labour and anxiety. What we ought perhaps to say is that he alone fully possesses all things, who fully despises all things. But what is most extraordinary is that in reality, the soul is not compelled by the body to attend to bodily needs, but is merely attracted by it. But the soul willingly gives us to the body, and strives to please it; while it scorns to subject itself to God, in spite of much exhortation, the memory of benefits received, and internal inspirations. The soul seeks its own good, its own profit, and it refuses to do God's Will. Surely, if the soul were not inferior to any animal, as it were, it ought to love above all things, God whom it resembles, and care nothing for all else. If, therefore, O soul, thou lovest the flesh, love no other flesh than the Body of Christ. For this Body, this sacred Flesh, was offered for thee, and for the salvation of the entire human race, on the altar of the Cross.

Every day we should turn over in our minds the Passion of Christ. For this continual meditation on the Passion of Christ uplifts the mind. It teaches us what ought to be done, what we ought to meditate upon, what we ought to know, and what we ought to feel and think. It enkindles our fervour to embrace arduous things. It makes us long to be made little of, to be despised and afflicted, and it gives us a sure rule to follow in thought, word and deed.

O desirable Passion! O admirable Death! What more wonderful, than that Death should give Life, and should heal wounds? What a marvel, that Blood should wash us white, and cleanse our inmost stains, that exceeding sorrow should bring forth sweetness, that the opening of the Side should join heart to heart? But cease not to wonder at this, that the Sun, darkened, gives forth more light than ever, that fire, extinguished, bursts into fiercer flame, that the ignominy of the Passion brings forth glory.

Is it not indeed a marvel, that Christ, thirsting on the Cross, should inebriate us, that One stripped naked should adorn us with the robe of virtues, that His Hands, nailed

to the Cross, can loosen our bonds, that His Pierced Feet can enable us to run in the way of holiness? Giving forth His own spirit, He breathes life into us. Dying on the Cross, He calls us to heavenly things.

O lovable and wonderful Passion! He who meditates on thee, is weaned from earth, and becomes not only angelic, but Divine! For he who dwells by meditation in the Sufferings of Christ, loses sight of himself, his gaze is fixed on His Suffering Lord. He wills to carry the cross with Him, and for His dear sake, He bears all things, both good and evil, with ease, and carries in his heart Him Who holds in His Hand heaven and earth. He desires, with Christ, to be crowned with thorns, and already in hope, he is crowned with glory. He longs to be naked on the Cross with Christ, and to suffer cold in company with Him, and lo! he is set on fire with exceeding ardour of love. With Christ he wishes to taste gall, and lo! he is given to drink ineffably sweet wine. He desires with Christ on the Cross to be mocked, and he is honoured by angels, and adopted as a son by the Blessed Virgin. Desiring to sorrow with Christ, he is made glad; willing to be afflicted with Him, he is consoled, and made exceedingly joyful. With Christ he wants to hang on the Cross, and Christ most sweetly embraces him. He would bow his head in the fear of death, and Christ, raising his head, most tenderly kisses it.

O lovable Death; O delightful Death! Oh, why was I not in the place of the Cross, that the Hands of Christ might rest on my hands, and His Feet be nailed to my feet? Certainly I would have said to that fortunate Joseph of Arimathea: "Thou shalt not take Jesus from me, thou shalt bury me together with Him in the sepulchre! For I wish never more to be separated from Him. And if this cannot be done in the body, I nevertheless wish to realise this my desire in spirit. For it is good for me to be with Him, and in Him I wish to make three tabernacles—one in His Hands, one in His Feet, and a third and a lasting one, in His Side. There I would rest, sleep, watch, drink, eat, read, adore, and do all the business of my life. There I

would speak to His Heart, and I shall obtain all that I desire from Him. Thus doing, I shall be walking in the footsteps of His most Sweet Mother, whose soul the Passion of Her Son transfixed. There, wounded, I will speak to her in all security, and I will get her to do all that I wish. I will not only appear Crucified with her Son, but going back to the Crib, I will lie there, a little one, with Him, that I may be able with her Son, to be nourished at her breasts. I will therefore mingle the milk of the Mother with the Blood of the Son, and make out of both, for myself, a most sweet drink."

O most loving Wounds of Our Lord Jesus Christ! For having once entered therein, with my eyes open, those eyes of mine are filled with His Blood, and so I am unable to behold anything else. Thus I went in, feeling my way with my hand, until I reached the inmost entrails of His Charity, and being altogether encompassed therewith, I was unable to go back. And therefore I dwell here, and I am fed on His Food, and inebriated with His Drink. There I so abound with sweetness, that I am unable, and know not how to describe it. And He who formerly entered the virginal womb for the sake of sinners, now deigns to bear me within Him. But I fear much, that He will bring me forth, and then I shall be cast out from these delights, which I now enjoy. But certainly, if He should bring me forth, He ought, as a mother, to feed me at the breast, to carry me in His Arms, to lift me up with His Hands, to kiss me with His Lips, to cherish me in His Bosom. And now I know what I shall do. Even if He should bring me forth, I know that His Wounds are always open, and through them I can once more enter into Him, and this I shall do so often, that at last, I shall be inseparably one with Him.

O blindness of the children of Adam! who know not how to enter into Christ by means of His Wounds! They wear themselves out in labours beyond their strength, and all the time these Wounds are open for their rest! Do we not know that Christ is the Joy of the Blessed? Why therefore

do we tarry to enter in through His Wounds, through the Holes of His Body, into His Joy? What madness is ours! The blessedness of Angels lies open before us, the walls and fences are broken down, and we neglect to enter therein! Perhaps we expect that before we can do this, our body will have to fail, not knowing that even in this present time, the soul can there find its rest.

But believe me, if we will but enter into Him by these narrow portals, not only our soul, but even our body will find therein rest, and a wondrous sweetness. And what is carnal in us, and all carnal tendencies, will, after our entrance into these Wounds, become spiritual. So that we shall gradually come to deem all other delights but those which we here experience, as nothing. For when for the sake of charity or duty, the soul shall command us to leave this retreat, even the very body, being entranced, will bid us tarry therein. And if this be so with the body, how great will be the sweetness which the soul enjoys, which, through these Wounds, is united to the Heart of Christ. I am unable to describe this mysterious sweetness, but if we but once experience it, we shall know for ourselves.

Behold the storehouse of remedies is open to us, full of all aromatics, rich in medicaments. Enter in by the windows of the Wounds, and there we shall receive a medicine, healing, restorative, preservative and enduring. We have but to take whatever kind of remedy we desire. If we wish to be anointed with most sweet ointments, entering in by these Wounds, we shall find them there. Behold the gate of Paradise is open, and by the soldier's lance the forbidding sword of the Guardian Cherubim is turned aside! Behold the Tree of Life, pierced not only in the Trunk but in the Branches. And unless we place our feet, that is, our affections, in these blessed Holes, we shall not be able to reach to the Fruit of this Tree, and gather it.

Behold the Treasury of Divine Wisdom, and of Eternal Charity is open! Enter into it, therefore, by the openings of the Wounds, and together with knowledge, we shall obtain

great delights. Oh, how blest is that Lance, and those Nails, which merited to make these openings!

Oh, if I had but been in the place of that Lance, I would never have left the Side of Christ, but I would have said: "Here is my rest for ever and ever, here will I dwell, for I have chosen it!" O foolish and slow of heart! who in order to possess some vain thing, will often rush headlong into danger, and often not be able to find a way out! But to possess the Son of God, the Supreme Good, the Brightness and Splendour of Eternal Light, we will not enter the open gates of His Adorable Wounds!

O soul, made to God's Image, how canst thou any longer contain thyself? Behold thy most sweet Spouse, wounded for thy sake, and now resplendent in heavenly glory, behold how He longs to embrace thee, and to bestow on thee His most sweet kisses, and thou neglectest to hasten unto Him! For out of His exceeding love, He opened to us His Side, that He might bestow upon us His Heart. He also willed to have His Hands and His Feet pierced, that when we should come unto Him, our hands might enter into His Hands, and our feet into His, that thus we might be inseparably united to Him. In the Apostle's words: "I beseech thee, try all these things." Let us indeed strive to experience them, and if it seems good to us, let us never depart from this refuge and I doubt not that if such experience is really granted to us, we shall count as bitterness all that is not Him.

Let us joyfully enter, then, through these gates of the Divine Wounds, and having entered, let us lock the gate behind us, so that we may never be able to leave this retreat, and then shall we be filled with wonder at our own blindness and that of others, as to this dwelling. Let us nevertheless rejoice at the sweetness we now experience, and let our hearts be so enkindled by it, that our souls may as it were strive to leave the body, and really dwell in Christ's Wounds. Then will our souls be so inebriated by sweetness and fervour, that we shall hardly be able to bend them to other things. O wounds, piercing hearts of stone! enkind-

ling frozen minds, and melting cold hearts into Love! O True Hope, Life and Sweetness! O truly Our Life, Our Sweetness and Our Hope!

If by this meditation on the Passion, we arrive at that sweetness of which I speak, let us take care not to meditate on Christ's Sufferings merely for the sake of the sensible sweetness we may find therein, but let us do it so that recognising so great a gift of our Creator, we may be set on fire by His love. And this ought to be our constant prayer.

A DEVOUT PRAYER

O holy Lord, Almighty Father, Eternal God, for the sake of Thy bounty, and for the sake of Thy Son, who bore me His Passion and Death, and for the sake of the excellent holiness of His Mother, and by the merits of Blessed Francis, and of all Thy Saints, grant to me, a sinner, and unworthy of all Thy benefits, that I may love Thee alone, that I may always thirst after Thee, and Thy love, that I may ever bear in my heart the benefit of Thy Passion, that I may know my own misery, and may desire to be despised and humbled by all. Amen. Let nothing sadden me but sin. Amen.

HOW WE SHOULD STRIVE TO COMPASSIONATE CHRIST CRUCIFIED

In order to compassionate the Lord Jesus Christ Crucified, let us first strive, as far as we can, to be united to Him by fervent love. For the more fervently we love Him, the more shall we compassionate His sufferings. And the more we compassionate Him, the more will our love for Him be enkindled. And thus love and compassion will so help one another to increase, that we shall eventually arrive at perfection, unless kept back by some misery of our own. And

above all, let us strive to get rid of all presumption, diffidence and negligence. For a man should embark on such a noble enterprise humbly, confidently, and promptly, and with all possible cleanness of heart. And though a man may seem to himself unworthy and wicked, nevertheless let him not desist, for Our Lord was crucified for sinners.

First of all therefore, let us strive to be so united to God by love, that our heart may be more His than our own. For how then should we not feel His Wounds? And what sufferings would He have, that did not also become our own? Let us strive, therefore, as far as we can, that our heart may enter wholly into Him, and outside of Him, let us count ourselves as nothing, and care about nothing that concerns ourselves, apart from Him. Let our whole concern be Our Suffering Lord. For whatever we are is His, nor should we let anyone else have any share in us. If we are thus transformed into Him, I cannot believe that we shall not be wounded with His wounds, and that we shall not be inundated with His opprobrium, His mockeries, and His shame. And then what joy will be ours, and what sweetness! For the Lord in His mercy will give us to experience this. I should indeed be able but poorly to describe it with my pen. And if these things seem to us to be too high for us, and that we cannot reach to them as we would desire, still we may attain them in a less perfect way which I shall now describe.

We ought then to consider, how we should bear such sufferings as to be flayed alive like St. Bartholomew, or to be burnt like St. Laurence. Or picture to ourselves any other kinds of torments, such as having our flesh torn with iron hooks. And when we have brought home to ourselves how terrible such torments would be to us, then let us consider that Our Lord Jesus Christ suffered much more terrible things for us, vile sinners that we are. On the Cross He bore more intolerable sufferings even than we should have to endure in the aforesaid torments. Then let us turn over in our hearts what anguish He bore, and what affliction of soul, and how great was the love that drove Him to this,

and in such meditations our hearts will be touched by His sufferings as far as they can be, and we shall seem to ourselves to be bearing them, and we shall shed bitter tears, and I doubt not that they will be turned into the greatest sweetness.

And if this does not suffice, we may try another method. Let us make a scourge, and in secret strike ourselves with it, until we feel great pain, let us turn our thoughts to Christ Crucified, and consider that our sweet Beloved Spouse, our Love, the Desire of our Souls, the Joy of Angels, the Reward of the Blessed, the Lord Jesus Christ, suffered for us vile wretches, incomparably greater things in His Body. And let us have no doubt, that such a practice teaches a man to compassionate sufferings, for he himself has borne them.

To all this add prayer, so that we may be, as it were, continually praying to Our Lord Jesus Christ, that He may wound our hearts by His own Wounds, and that by those Wounds and sufferings of His we may obtain from His bounty what we desire. And if because of the hardness of our heart, none of these things avail to soften it, let us weep and detest ourselves as some vile thing, and say: "How long will the wickedness of my heart prevail against my Suffering Lord Jesus, whose Wounds have overcome the power of the devil, blotted out the wickedness of our first parents, shattered the gates of hell, and opened those of Paradise? And is the malice of my heart so great, indeed, that it cannot be won by so excellent a goodness? What can exceed the worthlessness and the malice of my heart?"

Alas! what will become of me, who in such dire need, cannot even obtain a remedy from the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ? Let not mine eyes cease to weep, until the abundance of my tears softens the hardness of my heart. Alas! Alas! whither shall I flee from Thy Spirit? What shall I do since I am unable to find the life of my soul, and to taste the outpouring of the Divine Mercy upon me? I will sit in the dung heap, and I will scrape the corruption

of my mind with a potsherd, I will afflict myself, I will not spare myself, until in this affliction of spirit and body, I shall find my afflicted Lord Jesus.

It is certainly a wonder that a man can have patience with himself, seeing such hardness in his own heart, and not grieving at it. O wicked heart, how long wilt thou resist so immense a bounty? Why dost thou take more delight in the wounds of sin, than in the Wounds of Jesus Christ? Why dost thou feel more for a small puncture in thy foot, than for the most grievous death of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the most intense suffering of the Sacred Head of Him, who is the Life of thy soul, thy Christ? Could there be greater weakness or folly? O man, does it not seem to thee that thou lovest most him for whom thou feelest the greatest compassion in his suffering? Therefore, dost thou not love thy own foot more than thy Lord? For thou feelest more compassion for this small pain in thy foot, and dost, as it were, pour out thy heart upon it, rather than upon Him, the Lord thy God, in His greatest affliction and pain, and towards Him thy heart is little touched or not at all.

O unparalleled blindness! Oh, how wretched we are, inferior in wisdom even to serpents, who when in straits, make sure of saving their head, and expose to mishaps all the rest of their body. Would it not seem, indeed, that we were already cut off from our Head, Jesus Christ, when, He being wounded, we do not even feel His Wounds? Alas, alas, my Lord, why then hast Thou made me, if I am not to be united to Thee? And if I am united to Thee, why do I not feel Thy Wounds? Why am I not wounded together with Thee?

For me, O Lord, for my sake, wast Thou wounded, and not for Thine own, and it is Thou who bearest the Wounds, and not I! What does this mean? It is I who ought to bear wounds, and not Thou! For it is I who have sinned, I who have done wickedly, but Thou Who art an innocent sheep, what hast Thou done? Let these Wounds of Thine, I beseech Thee, be upon me, and upon my Father's house.

Give us back, O Lord, give us back our own wounds, lest Thou Who art innocent, shouldst appear guilty, bearing the wounds of others, or at least wound our hearts together with Thee. Behold I would die, unless Thou woundest my mind. I cannot bear to see my heart unwounded, when I behold Thee, my Saviour, thus for my sake fastened to the most vile Cross.

Either, O Lord, wound me together with Thee, or give me leave to pierce myself with a material sword. For I would not live without wounds, my Lord, when I behold Thee all wounded.

If all these considerations affect us not, then we are unworthy of so noble a benefit, and we should deem ourselves beasts and not men, and only fit to dwell with wild beasts, for we are unworthy of any other companionship. And perhaps, if we humble ourselves profoundly, He who regarded the humility of His handmaiden, will regard the humility of our souls, and will give us a new heart, wherewith to know Our Suffering Lord God.

But when, O Lord Jesus, will this be? To delay it is death to me, and who knows, O Lord, if Thou makest me wait too long, I may perhaps melt away altogether in my desire, and then Thou couldst never impress upon me the abiding memory of Thy Wounds. For already, O Lord, my soul begins, as it were, to faint away, and I am reduced to nothing, by my desire of sharing Thy Wounds.

O Lord Jesus, where is Thy Wisdom? Dost Thou not know that it is better to have Thy creature wounded, than reduced to utter nothingness? Wherefore, delay not, I beseech Thee, lest by tarrying too long, Thou shouldst wholly lose him whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy Precious Blood. Run, run, O Lord Jesus, hasten to wound me, lest there should be nothing of me left, if Thou dost tarry too long.

Alas! how vile I have grown, since it seems that God, Who loves His enemies, hates *me*! Have I thus become more repulsive to Him than an open enemy would be? For He willed to be mortally wounded, that He might redeem

His enemies, and behold I faint and fail, and He seems not to care! For I do not ask that He shall be wounded again for me, but that to me, as to one already dead, He should apply His Wounds, so that I may live anew.

Lord Jesus, Thou hast permitted that the lance, an inanimate creature, should, in wounding Thee, enter into Thy Body, and yet Thou wilt not allow *me*, Thy rational creature, to enter into Thee, by Wounds which are already made? What is the meaning of all this? Is it that my heart is harder and viler than any lance? Or thinkest Thou that it is more cruel? But my cruelty cannot harm Thee now, if I shall enter in by Thy Wounds, and run to and fro, and eat Thy Flesh through Love, yet Thou wouldst remain ever impassible, and my craving would be satisfied, yet ever enkindled.

Why should I still complain? Thou tarricest, Thou comest not, and wearied out by my desire, I begin, as it were, to grow insane, for I am ruled by love, not reason, and thither I run impetuously, whither I am borne by Thee. Those who seek me, mock me, and know not that I am drunk with love of Thee. "Why," they ask, "does this mad one so shout aloud in the streets?" And they mark not the intensity of my desire. They know not that the love of Thee impedes the use of reason, and that he who fervently seeks Thee, leaves himself and all things, and he who seeks Thee with a pure heart cares so little for external things, that often he knows not what he does.

Come, O my good Lord Jesus, tarry no longer, lest from the intensity of my desire, I grow simple and lose all sense. But perhaps what Thou requirest of me is that I should be withdrawn from all cares, and being made pure, should enter in through Thy glorious Wounds, with which Thou wholly woundest the lover. Then shall I cry out and say: "Alas, O Lord Jesus, how do I behold Thee so cruelly wounded, with what pain do I contemplate Thee so weighed down! Who will grant me that I may die for Thee, O most sweet Lord Jesus? I cannot bear to see Thee live in such suffering, to look upon Thee fills me with exceeding

dread and horror! And yet if Thou wert freed from these sufferings it would be death to me, and therefore I am in straits on every side, and I know not what to choose, unless to be crucified together with Thee. Contemplating Thy sufferings, I faint away in myself, and become insensible from grief, that Thou shouldst bear such evils for my sake. What hast Thou done, O Lord, why for one so vile as I am hast Thou ascended the Cross? And what am I but a most vile worm—detestable corruption, for whom Thou, my Lord, the Lord of all things, shouldst be thus wounded, Thou Who art the Wisdom of the Father!

"Wherefore hast Thou made such an exchange, that Thou givest Life for Death, truth for vanity, grace for malice, glory for misery? Who can think, who can say, why Thou—the All-Powerful—hast so acted? Exceeding was Thy love, and in this appears the abyss of Thy immense loving-kindness. For in Thee I see no cause for death, but the superabundance of Thy charity. Were it not better for me, O good Jesus, not to be, than that, being created by Thee, I should slay Thee? And why do I not tear my own flesh from grief? Or how is it that every creature does not slay me, who was the cause of Thy death? Is it not a marvel, that I can think of Thee, so noble and kind a Lord, suffering for me so vile a death, and yet faint not away through excess of grief? And how, if it were not against Thy Will, should I not slay myself with a sword, through grief, for I was the cause of Thy Death? Ought I not to bear with myself most patiently, just as I would behave in the presence of some enemy, whom with my whole heart I should long to slay, but am withheld by some just reason?

"But is it not the height of wickedness, that I, after the most admirable and fruitful benefit of Thy Passion, cease not to sin in Thy Presence, just as if Thy Passion had never been? Thou hast given Thyself to me, and I deny Thee. Thou hast dispelled my darkness, and I again run into it. Thou hast rejected the world, and yet I choose it. Seest Thou not, O most patient Lord Jesus, that I always

try to do what is contrary to Thy Will and resist Thee to Thy Face? If Thou sayest: 'I will that thou shouldst do this,' I say: 'I will not.' If Thou sayest: 'I will not that thou shouldst do this,' I say: 'I will do it.' I know Thee, my Lord, to be my Supreme God, and that I am nothing, and yet I ignore Thee, as if Thou wert nothing, and I turn the gaze of my heart and my body on vain things and even sometimes on things not fit to name, and my heart is so bound in chains with love of them that it cannot be raised to Thee, to whom it belongs, and this is truly a detestable abuse. But, my good Lord Jesus, didst Thou then die for me in vain? Hast Thou lost me, whom Thou didst buy so dearly, for a nothing? Oh, slay me together with Thee, and transfix me along with Thyself, lest I should be separated from Thee, and grant that I may live with Thee for ever. Amen."

*A MEDITATION OF COMPASSION FOR CHRIST'S
BLESSED MOTHER.*

The Mother of Jesus stood by the Cross.

O my Lady, where didst Thou stand? Was it only *by* the Cross? Yea, rather, it was most certainly *on* the Cross, that thou wert crucified together with thy Son.

But there is this difference between the two, that *He* was crucified in Body, and *thou* in heart. And His Wounds which were spread all over His Body, are all united in thy heart. There, O Lady, was thy heart pierced with the lance, there was it crowned with thorns, there was it mocked, reproached, and filled with insults. There was it given gall and vinegar for food.

O Lady, why didst thou go to be immolated for us? Did not the Passion of Thy Son suffice for us, unless the Mother were crucified together with Him? O Heart of love, why art thou turned into a world of sorrow? I look, Lady, upon thy heart, and I behold, not a heart, but myrrh, wormwood,

and gall. I seek the Mother of God, and lo! I find scourges, spittle, and wounds, for thou art wholly immersed in these outrages. O thou so full of bitterness, what hast thou done? Why is a vessel of sanctity become a vessel of punishment? O Lady, why didst thou not remain alone in thine own room? Why didst thou go to Calvary? For it is not thy custom, O Lady, to hasten to such spectacles. Why did not womanly modesty restrain thee? Why did the horror of crime not disgust thee? Why did not the modesty of virginity keep thee back? Why did not the ill-repute of the spot, the vulgar crowds, the hatred of evil, keep thee away? Why wert thou not repelled by the clamour of the crowds, the folly of the rabble, the machinations of the evil one?

Thou didst not give these things a thought, O Lady, for thy heart was all estranged from itself by sorrow, it was no longer thine own, but was wholly immersed in the affliction of thy Son, and in the Wounds of thine ONLY ONE, and in the death of the Beloved. Thy heart thought not of the crowd, but of the wound; not of the multitude, but of the nails; not of the cries, but of the bruises; not of the multitude, but of sorrow. Come back, O Lady, to thy first dwelling, lest, when the Shepherd is struck, we lose thee too, and so at one stroke, we are deprived of the help of both.

It is not the custom, Lady, to condemn women to such a death, nor was any sentence pronounced against thee, O Lady! But thou hearest not our remonstrances, for thou art wholly filled with bitterness. Thy whole heart, O Lady, is absorbed in the Passion of thy Son! O marvel! thou art immersed in the Wounds of Christ, and the whole Crucified Christ is contained in thine inmost heart! How is this, that He Who Himself contains, is contained? O man, wound thine own heart if thou wouldst answer this question; open thine own heart with the lance, and the nail, and the Truth, will enter in. For the Son of Justice cannot enter into a closed heart. But, O wounded Lady, wound our hearts and renew in our souls the Passion of Thy Son, and thine own Compassion. Unite thy wounded heart to ours, that with thee we may be wounded by thy wounds.

But why, O Lady, have not I thy heart, so that wherever I go, I may behold thee, transpierced together with thy Son?

O Lady, if thou wilt not give me thy Crucified Son, nor thine own wounded heart, I beseech thee give me at least the wounds of thy Son, His mockeries, insults and reproaches, and give me thine own feelings of these things. For what mother is there, whom if she could, would not transfer the sufferings of her Son to a slave? Or, if thou art so wedded to all these things, O Lady, that thou wilt not remove them from thy Son, nor from thyself, at least, O Lady, unite me, an unworthy one, to these wounds and these shames, that thou and thy Son may have the solace of a companion in these sufferings.

Oh, how blessed should I be, if I could at least be one with you both in wounds! For what is greater, Lady, in these days, than to have our hearts joined to thine, and to the transpierced Body of thy Son? Is not thy heart full of grace? And if it is open, will not grace flow into a heart that is joined to thine own? And if thy Son is the glory of the Blessed, how will not that sweetness of glory flow through His Wounded Body into a heart joined to His? I do not see how it can be otherwise, but what I fear is, that we should sometimes be far away from thee and thy Son, when we think we are near. O Lady, why grantest thou not what I ask? If I have offended thee, in justice wound my heart. If I have served thee, now for a reward I ask wounds. And where, O Lady, where is thy loving-kindness? Where is thy immense pity? Why art thou become cruel to me, thou who art always so gracious? Why hast thou become bitter to me, to whom thou wert always so kind and loving? Why art thou niggardly with me, thou who wert always so liberal, so generous? I do not ask of thee, O Lady, the sun or the stars, but I beg for wounds. Why is it that thou art so sparing of these wounds? O Lady, either take away my bodily heart, or wound my heart. For it is a shame and a reproach to me, to behold my Lord Jesus wounded, and thee, O Lady, also wounded with Him, while I, a vile sinner, a slave, go untouched.

I know well what I will do. Either I will importune thee without ceasing with my cries and tears, and prostrate at thy feet I will beg, I will cry, I will be importunate even to excess, and at last I shall obtain what I ask from thee. Or if thou strikest me, in order to make me withdraw, I will stand and bear thy blows, until I shall be covered with wounds, nor do I ask aught of thee, but wounds. But if thou waivest blows, and meetest me with blandishments, I will persevere, and receive thy sweet words, and they will wound my heart with love. But if thou dost neither of these things, and wilt not speak to me at all, then will my heart be wounded with sadness and grief, and thus I shall not withdraw without wounds.

SIX THINGS TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE LORD'S
PASSION.

We may meditate on Christ's Passion:

1.—To imitate it. 2.—To compassionate it. 3.—To admire it. 4.—To rejoice in it. 5.—To be transformed by it. 6.—To find rest in it.

1.—First, let us consider the Passion that we may *imitate* it. This is the highest aim a Christian can have, this is the supreme norm and rule of religion, and the sum of religious perfection—to imitate Christ in His Passion and Death. Let the Saviour's Passion, then, be the rule of our life. The more we are conformed to it, the more shall we be consoled by it, and we shall feel desolation in the measure of our unlikeness to Christ Crucified. Therefore, let us wish, as far as may be, to be downtrodden, despised, mocked, abused, persecuted, scourged by all, criticised by all, even in our religious exercises. Let us be naked with the naked Christ, and let us desire to possess nothing whatsoever. Indeed, if we have possessions, let it be to us a grievous suffering and an immense trial. But to possess nothing at all, let that be

our supreme happiness. Let us detest softness of living and pleasures, and let us prefer common and insipid food. Let us desire that all food should taste to us of gall, rather than of honeyed sweetness, for Christ in His greatest need was given gall and vinegar. And that I may sum up all in a few words, let us consider what Christ suffered for us, how He underwent His Passion, and for our part, as far as may be, let us be conformed to His likeness.

2.—Secondly, let us consider the Saviour's Passion that we may *compassionate* Him. For we should carefully consider in our Hearts His scourging, mockeries and reproaches. We should mark well what contempt and abjection Our Lord Jesus Christ underwent. What suffering in His Body, what grief in His Mind, did not our Saviour endure in His Passion and in His compassion for our sins.

Consider with what bitterness the Sweetness of Angels was filled, and that it was not so much His own suffering and our ingratitude that weighed Him down, as the affliction of His Mother who was present, and whom He so loved, and yet He beheld her, as it were, fainting from the sorrow of her Compassion. There was the Son Crucified with the Mother, and because of their mutual and intense love, the affliction of both was exceedingly great, and this because each suffered in the other. The Mother knew that the Son suffered for her, as for the rest of the redeemed. The Son knew and saw for certain, that the sword pierced the Mother's heart through her Compassion, wherefore the Passion of the Son was truly the Passion of the Mother.

Therefore, O Christian, turn over and revolve these things in thy heart, and let thy whole soul be filled with the sufferings of Jesus and Mary, beholding thy Lord and thy Spouse suffering such things for thee. If thou art truly united to Him through love, then thou wilt compassionate Him.

But if thou feelest not the sorrow of thy head, how art thou one with Him? And as the Head is more to be compassionated than the other members, without doubt we ought to compassionate Him incomparably more than any other beloved son or friend we may have who suffers, and indeed,

more than our own selves, if we were to suffer the aforesaid things.

Now, therefore, dearly beloved, let us be incbricated with His bitterness, and strive to feel His Wounds. Let His reproaches, His stripes and His Wounds transfix our inmost hearts, so that in us, there may be no mental faculty which is not inundated with the grief of compassion and of intense affliction.

3.—Thirdly, consider Him in order to *admire Him*. For if we consider, who, why, and for whom He suffered, there is much to wonder at.

Who suffered? The True Son of God, the Omnipotent, the Supremely Wise and Good, and whatever of nobility and greatness we attribute to Him, is infinitely below what He really is. All things, however great and good, are but ashes and vanity in comparison with Him.

What did He suffer? Wanderings, flight, thirst, hunger, heat, cold, temptations, fears, persecutions, spying, spitting upon, opprobrium, bonds, scourges, mockeries, blows and wounds. Glory was spat upon, Justice was condemned, Innocence was pronounced guilty, God was blasphemed, Christ was trodden upon, Life was slain, the Sun was obscured, the Moon darkened, the Stars scattered. All these things He bore patiently, as a lamb, He, Who with one gesture, could have swept the whole world into hell!

But for *whom* did He suffer all these things? For wicked slaves, for despicable enemies, for men who were devils, and sons of the devil, by their imitation of the evil one; for despisers of His Divine Majesty and ingrates for the Divine benefits.

And such a One suffered such things for beings so vile and abject, but *from whom* did He suffer? From those to whom He had shown a most special love, from His chosen ones, to whom He had shown every sort of kindness. He Who was Himself Greatness, suffered from the vilest creatures; He Who was Wisdom, from fools; He Who was the Power and Wisdom of God, the Brightness of Eternal Light, from foul creatures. By the consideration of these things, we

are raised up to admiration of the Divine Benignity and Bounty.

4.—Fourthly, let us consider Christ's Passion that we may *rejoice* in it. We ought to rejoice in it, for the sake of man's Redemption, for the restoration of the Angelic ranks, and for the Divine Mercy shown in it.

Surely we ought to rejoice in the Redemption of mankind, and to rejoice beyond measure, that this was accomplished by the Passion and Death of Christ. Who, I ask, would not rejoice beyond measure, when he beholds that God loves him so much, that He subjected Himself to so much shame and suffering for his sake? I do not say that he should rejoice in the shame and suffering of Christ, but in so great a proof of His love, and in the might of His Redemption that is shown in His Passion.

What prince in the empire of some great Sovereign could behold himself so loved that the Emperor or King was ready to die for him, and not rejoice exceedingly that he was so loved by One so great? How much more ought we, most vile men, wicked sinners and slaves of Satan, to rejoice and exult, when we see the King of kings and the Lord of lords and our Creator Jesus, love us with so much constancy that He immolated Himself for us in so vile and shameful a death? We ought indeed to be beside ourselves with exultation and jubilee. For He loves me incomparably more than I love myself.

Let us rejoice and exult, that by the Passion of Christ is repaired the Angelic ruin. It ought to be a great joy to us, when we see that by the Death of Christ, so noble a hierarchy is reinstated from among ourselves. So that now we are one Fold and one Shepherd, that we may all be one in the One. In this, the whole Court of heaven and the whole Church Militant ought to rejoice. O salutary, most lovely, and venerable Passion, which thus unites what had been torn away, and joinest what had been separated, and unitest all in a bond of consummate love and in the happiness of eternal joy!

We ought above all to rejoice and to exult in the supreme

clemency of Our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, shown in what we have said above. In my opinion it is the supreme joy and glory of Angels and of men to contemplate intimately and profoundly the mercy and benevolence of God, and the immensity of His goodness, and this should be the essence of the joy and exultation of a contemplative soul. But where, I ask, does the outpouring of the Divine Goodness and the most sweet and kind clemency of Our Lord and God Jesus Christ, more appear, than in Christ's Passion? There He willed to suffer so many and so grievous evils, to deliver and to glorify His enemy, to expiate a vanity worthy of eternal death. Let man enter into this joy, and let him be refreshed by the magnificence of the Divine Goodness. Let man come to a deep heart, and let him be exalted in mind by the most excellent and unutterable clemency of the Suffering Christ.

5.—Fifthly, let us contemplate the Most Blessed Passion of Christ, for the melting of our hearts, and our perfect transformation into Himself. This will come to pass when a man not only imitates, compassionates, admires, and exults in Christ's Passion, but when the whole man has been converted to Our Lord Jesus Christ Crucified. A man will truly be melted into Christ, when going forth from himself, and being raised above all things, yea, abstracted from all, he is wholly turned to his Crucified Lord, so that he sees nothing, feels nothing within himself, but Christ Crucified, mocked, injured and suffering.

6.—Sixthly, let us contemplate Christ's Passion that we may obtain the sweetness of eternal quiet. This takes place when a man is so wholly melted into Jesus Christ that he never ceases to think upon His Passion. Entering as far as in him lies, into this treasure-house of the Passion, he is humbly and devoutly absorbed in holy love, and as it were faints away through his fervent devotion, and rests in Christ Crucified. The nearer he draws to Christ and the more closely he adheres to Him, the more will he feel this internal devotion and melting into Christ. The more he faints away out of love and fear and devotion, the more closely will he

cling to His Beloved, now dead for Him, and the more he will find rest in Him.

And it is in this way that love and devotion help one another, until the Spouse is wholly absorbed into that abode of fiery love which is the Passion of the Beloved. Thus she rests in the embraces of the Spouse, taking her spiritual repose, and seeming to cry out: "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, awaken not this beloved one until she herself desires it."

So should we rehearse the Passion of Our Lord. We should strive for the imitation of Christ Crucified, for the purgation of love and desire. Compassion leads to union and joy; admiration to the lifting up of the mind; joy and exultation to the dilating of the heart; transformation to resolution of amendment and perfect conformity to God's Will; and the persevering contemplation of Christ's Passion will give us internal quiet and tranquil devotion.

*THE PASSION AND THE CHRISTIAN VIRTUES,
FAITH AND THE REST.*

We must now consider the Passion with reference to the virtues.

What shall we say of Faith? I say that it is the foundation and the support of the whole Christian religion.

I ask, was it God Who suffered, or was it Man? If it really was God Who suffered, we have a proof in the Passion that Christ really was both God and Man. For the Passion in itself shows that He was beyond doubt, a Man. If you doubt the truth of this statement, I will show you how the Passion itself demonstrates that Christ was God. For if He had not been God and yet said that He was, He would be the proudest of men, a very demon. For even Lucifer never said that *he* was God, but only that he *wanted* to be

like unto God. But to one so proud as to claim the honours of God, unjustly, so much humiliation, shame and degradation, such a suffering and shameful death borne with such peace, patience and humility, would have been quite impossible.

Christ was not in the habit of claiming Divine honours, it was His custom to hide His Divinity under the form of a Man in all things, sin excepted, like other men. If He had not been God, on the contrary, and yet wanted to be thought God, He would have most carefully shunned whatever savoured of pain, humiliation, contempt, and the like. He would never have appeared to be hungry or thirsty, or tired; nor would He have wept, and suffered fear and pain. He made no secret of His suffering from all these things. But if He had been out to proclaim Himself God, He would carefully have hidden what He suffered from such ordinary human conditions.

On the other hand, He would not have taken much care to show Himself a man, and a passible and mortal man. But whatever savoured of pride, pomp and magnificence, that He would have sedulously cultivated, that He might be thought to be God, and He would have been quite content to be thought to be God, without making any parade of His Humanity. It would have been very difficult to reconcile the humiliations of His Humanity with the glory of the Godhead, and if He had wished to be thought only God, how would He have said: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death?" If you reply that it was obvious that He suffered unwillingly, that cannot be, for He Himself said: "Behold, we go to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be scourged, and mocked and crucified."

Why did He predict these things? If you say that He did it in order to deceive, this cannot be, for no one would give oneself up to a violent and shameful death, merely for the sake of a deception. If you say that He only seemed to die, but did not die really, I say that no man, however vicious or even diabolical, would have done such a thing; neither did the devil himself do it. And it would certainly

not have been the plan adopted by anyone who was not God, and wanted himself to be thought God, for it would have had just the contrary effect. This is proved by the fact that at the time of His Death all His disciples forsook Him, and as it is commonly said, the faith of the whole Church was centred in the Blessed Virgin Mary alone, for she alone never lost her faith in Christ.

It would be a most foolish and incredible thing to say, and it is not right either to say it or think it, that any man, no matter how diabolical, could get Himself worshipped as God by so ignominious a death, and such terrible shame and humiliation. Quite the contrary has been the testimony of facts. For, although Christ was truly God, nevertheless His Passion is even yet, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Gentiles, folly and scandal. Wherefore from Christ's Glorious Passion itself we urge that not only was Jesus Christ True Man, but True God.

If it had been the praise of man that He craved and sought, would He not have come down from the Cross, when the Jews said: "Let Him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe in Him?" For this way of the ignominious Passion, though of no profit to a man bent on deception, as we have shown, was yet most fitting to a God Who, from His own power, wisdom and goodness, longed to save man. And by obeying His Father even unto death, He procured what alone He desired, our Redemption and Salvation.

But this Glorious Passion is not only the foundation of faith, and the building up of hope, in which Christ gave Himself, but it is also the enkindling of charity, by which Our Lord immolated Himself. As for the Cardinal Virtues, the Passion is the example and rule of perfect prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice, as is manifest to all who possess the Gift of Understanding.

CALLING PLAIN CHRISTIANS

by **FATHER OLIVER, O.Cist.**
(Mount St. Joseph's, Roscrea).

This little book (Cr. 8vo., 68pp., paper cover) is, according to the author, "a very ordinary one," addressed to what, for want of a better phrase, are called "ordinary souls." The definition of "Ordinary souls" is "ordinary people"—not those who have devoted their lives to the service of God in the priesthood or religion. In short, the book is addressed to the laity; the ordinary laity, not the tertiary (though many tertiaries will benefit by it): its purpose is to tell them how to pray in the midst of the tear and toil of existence.

Father Oliver's breezy, sympathetic style will be appreciated by those whom he is addressing.

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