

The Passion and the Dolors

Meditations on Christ's Suffering and Mary's
Sorrows



Stabat Mater Press

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Through Suffering to Happiness (1898) – Fr. Victor van Tricht, S.J.

Reflections on the Stations of the Cross (1875) – Fr. Daniel Gilbert, D.D., V.G.

The Seven Dolors of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1898) – Eliza Starr

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Editor's Preface

The editor of this volume is not a theologian. He will make no attempt, therefore, to comment upon the theological structure or mystical depth of the works collected here. They stand well enough on their own, time-tested and devout, fit for any soul who wishes to meditate on the Passion of Our Lord and the sorrows of His Mother. Instead, he would like to say, in a few words, *why* these particular texts were chosen for publication by *Stabat Mater Press*, a publishing house with a singular aim: to forward the Social Kingship of Christ. That is to say, to participate, in our own way, in the rebuilding of Christendom.

Such a task is certainly vast. It cannot be accomplished *alone* by proclamations and social programs, and still less by this-or-that voting block or political slogans. It begins — indeed, it must begin — *in the home*. For the home is the first society, the first polity. It is the only institution outside of the Church that, when rightly ordered, prepares the soul for the sacraments, for the duties of state, and for the battle against the world.

It is apparent that the world has made its choice. It has crowned its idols; it has torn down its crucifixes. The Kingship of Christ is, for it, *the* grave offense. And so we ought not not argue with it. We certainly ought not wait for permission. Rather, we turn inward, toward the tabernacle and the hearth, and we begin again by building, praying,

suffering, offering penance, and sanctifying, as our ancestors did when the first stones of Christendom were laid.

And to suffer rightly, we must contemplate the Cross.

The three works in this volume — *Meditations on the Way of the Cross*, *Reflections on the Stations of the Cross*, and *The Seven Dolors of the Blessed Virgin Mary* — have been selected both for their spiritual merit and for their *formative power* in one's spiritual life. The editor wishes them to be read aloud in families, pondered in silence, carried into Lent and, further, into every Friday of the year. They are *weapons* of recollection and battle plans in the art of Catholic sorrow. They are, in a word, reminders of the true battle. For those who wish to form Catholic homes — homes where the Kingship of Christ is more than an abstraction — they offer the only foundation: union with the sufferings of Jesus and Mary.

The battle, in many ways, has already been won. Calvary stands forever. Our Lord has conquered through His death. But the field remains to be cleared, the walls of Christendom rebuilt, souls converted.

These were chosen to place us beneath the Cross. It is the editor's contention that there, and only there, must the rebuilding of Christendom begin.

The Editor

Stations of the Cross

Artwork

Station I



Jesus is SENTENCED to Death

Station II



Jesus Carries His Cross

Station III



Jesus Falls the First Time

Station IV



Jesus Meets His Mother

Station V



**SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS
JESUS CARRY HIS CROSS**

Station VI



Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Station VII



Jesus Falls for the Second Time

Station VIII



Jesus Consoles the
Weeping Women

Station IX



Jesus Falls for the Third Time

Station X



Jesus is Stripped of
His Garments

Station XI



Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

Station XII



Jesus Dies ON the Cross

Station XIII



Jesus is Taken Down
from the Cross

Station XIV



Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

Through Suffering to Happiness

Father Victor van Tricht, S.J.



Stabat Mater Press

Nihil Obstat

Frederick George Holweck, Censor theologicus

Imprimatur

+ Cardinal John Joseph Glennon

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16 December 1904

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Preface

My God!

I write these pages in Thy presence, with the thought of helping the souls that suffer.

To them Thou didst speak, saying: "Come to Me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you."

Give me, O my God, the grace to lead to Thee at least some of the most unhappy.

If, by chance, in their silken boudoirs, some lovers of the comfortable, some of those worldlings who try to reach happiness through pleasure, happen to read the title of this book, they wittily will smile, being aware indeed that therein is quite a foolish theory, and that such a Middle Ages mysticism is nowadays out of place as well as out of time.

"Thy saying is hard and who can hear it?" they will say as the disciples of old, when the Saviour uttered the words of truth: "If any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" or when He made the eight Beatitudes spring forth from the eight sorrows of life.

But it does not matter what *blasé* worldlings will say. The Word of God is eternally true, and the road of the cross, all the while mankind will continue rolling onward, shall remain the true way toward happiness: *per crucem ad lucem*.

As said the poets:

“A finer peace shall be wrought out of pain,

Than the stars in their courses know.

Ah me! but my soul is in sorrow till then

And the feet of the years move slow.”

Let us, therefore, study how to acquire this Christian happiness, let us see how “to abound with joy in all our tribulations.”

Father Joseph Mary Leleu

Troy, New York

Exaltation of the Holy Cross

1904

Introduction

“A heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam from the day of their coming forth from their mother’s womb until the day of their burial into the mother of all.” Suffering is that yoke.

The infant on entering this world sheds tears: it is his greeting to life. The old man who is in the agonies of death, sheds slow, cold, silent tears: it is his farewell to life. Between those two events, how many tears have been shed! Who can measure the bitterness and the suffering gathered in the heart of a man who has lived a long life?

Nobody escapes that yoke. Since the fall in Eden, it is the lot of everyone coming into the world; it is the fatal and inalienable heritage of the sin of our first parents; it is our share of punishment in the expiation extending from the beginning of the human race throughout all ages until the death of its last member.

Philosophy, relying on its own unaided researches, in vain strives to discover the origin of the physical evil, called suffering. Faith, with its supernatural light, finds it written in the first pages of Holy Writ: “Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife and hast eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee, that thou shouldst not eat, cursed is the earth in thy work; with labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life.” So while philosophy argues and faith reveals, mankind suffers.

In some the suffering is visible, and their pains arouse sympathy; no one envies their lot, for they are considered unhappy. Others pass before us with all the vain ostentation of happiness: their eyes are full of joy, their lips fall of smiles. We do not see beneath the mask, we believe them happy and envy their apparent good fortune. Could we, however, but behold them in their hours of solitude, how often should we not see them weeping bitter tears from a heart broken with anguish.

Still, there are others who are not a prey to such great afflictions; a more secret and less acute sensation undermines and consumes them, the sensation of emptiness. They grow disgusted with the vanity of created things, for creatures can not fill the void they feel in their heart. Hence they feel weariness, "that intolerable weariness which is at the bottom of everything."

There is a saying in Holy Writ which puzzles me. It is uttered by two different men under very different circumstances. The one, reduced to complete wretchedness, to poverty after great wealth, upbraided by his wife and all his friends; he had suddenly been bereft of his sons and daughters. Seated on a dunghill, covered with disgusting sores, he scraped the corrupt matter from them with a potsherd. This was Job. The other, overflowing with every kind of happiness, rich, powerful, glorious, honored, learned above all, the wisest of men, enjoying all the pleasures of mind and body, is seated upon his throne in a magnificent palace, surrounded by a splendid court. This was Solomon.

I ask Job about life. He answers, "My soul is weary of my life." I ask Solomon the same question, and in almost the same words he answers, "I am weary of my life." Who is not mystified by so great contrasts giving an identical reply to being weary of life. Is it true, then, that life is burdensome to everyone?

Yes, life is burdensome to everyone.

But, it may be asked, if suffering is unavoidable in this world, has it no consolation, no remedy? If there is, it is not in itself that the human heart can find them, for, says holy Job, "My help is not in me." Indeed, we can shake off our sorrow; we can undertake an absorbing and difficult work; we can become so enraptured with pleasure as to forget our disease, for a weaker sensation may be drowned or obliterated by a more powerful one, but only for a time. When this one ceases or vanishes, we, as it were, suddenly wake up as from a dream, and again find suffering in all its painful reality. We had, for some moments, forgotten the sword piercing our heart, and now we feel it again; it is still there, cutting and sinking deeper and deeper. Can we entirely forget suffering? Were we to forget, a new sorrow would arise. Does not every day bring with it its own suffering, its own trials? How many minutes do we enjoy perfect calm?

What indeed can we find to relieve our sufferings? What remedy have we for death which deprives us of our loved ones? What for bodily diseases, for our failures, for the disgrace we draw upon ourselves, for weariness of life, for the insipidity and vanity of everything created?

All we can do is to strive to be strong, to be resolute and to keep up our courage. That is all; and yet how often do we not fail in our efforts?

Or, again, can our wounded heart receive comfort and remedy from our fellow-men?

I do not deny that we may seek and find human comfort. Too often have I tasted the sweetness and power of friendship to disown its goodness and efficacy. 'Tis so good when we suffer, to lean upon a friendly heart and to feel the warm presence of a friendly hand. But alas! alas! This help is vain, because it comes from man who is vain himself.

When the mothers in and around Bethlehem had seen their loved babes cruelly murdered in their very arms, they could not be comfort-

ed by their friends, for, as the evangelist says, "Rachel would not be comforted, because they are not." Could their sympathizing friends give them back the dead they were bewailing?

Who has not felt his utter helplessness in relieving the sorrow of a friend? Death comes to his home, ruin falls upon him and his family, and the fond hopes of his life are suddenly shattered. He suffers, his soul is full of anguish. You go to him with your heart overflowing with a lively sympathy, you would, if you could, give up your share of happiness to compensate his loss, and suddenly when you are near him, your tongue becomes mute, words fail you to express your heart-felt sympathy, your mind is bewildered, and with sorrowing look and a warm pressure of hands, you can say only: "My friend, my poor friend!"

Although there are many ways of expressing condolence, true friendship, true sympathy feels they are inadequate and impotent to relieve sorrow and suffering. Only those who do not heartily sympathize or do not understand sorrow, know then how to speak like actors in a play. Of such comforters Job said: "I haven often heard such words as these: you are troublesome comforters."

How seldom do we understand the sorrow of a friend!

How seldom do our friends understand our sorrow!

They see the outward, the visible sign; they do not see the internal deep wound. And even when God sends us, to sooth our life, a true, devoted friend who understands and feels for us, how often does He not, after a time, take him away from us! – We lose our friends, we leave them, they die and we remain alone, surviving, as it were, the burial of our own heart. No, no, it is not from man we can expect comfort.

Is it from God?

In Holy Writ nothing charms me so much as the permanent solicitude of God for mankind. He uses the most tender comparisons.

Sometimes He speaks “as a nurse that cherisheth her children;” sometimes “as the hen that gathereth her chickens under her wings again as the father of the prodigal son, moved with compassion and hastening to meet and receive him, falling upon his neck and kissing him; and very often as a mother: “As one whom the mother caresseth, so will I comfort you.”

It looks as if He wished to use all the ingenuity of love in order to attract to Himself the many souls that suffer. He appears as if imploring and beseeching them to come to Him for consolation. And how very seldom we go to him!

Why?

Do we doubt His power to comfort us and to dry our tears? No; we are aware that our loving God possesses in Himself all goodness and happiness. How often, lifting up our souls to Him in prayer, have we said, “O my God, everything which is glorious, honorable, and lovely is in Thee, in an eminent degree, in a most perfect purity and inseparable from Thee. In Thee are all delights and raptures. Thou art the only true and perfect God; Thou art the only true Friend that stays with us when every other friend has forsaken us.” This we know and believe. We know and feel that God alone can comfort us, because He is the true and only source of happiness.

Still we do not go to Him. We go to men, we go to creatures, that are vain and impotent. What may be the reason of such inconsistency?

It is perhaps because our poor souls are so dominated by our bodies, that we are unable to catch any comfort except that which flatters the senses. We are, in some manner, so materialized, as to be almost unable to relish what is intellectual or spiritual. God, as it were, should show Himself to our corporal eyes, should touch our hands, and speak to our ears, in order to be seen, felt, and heard by us. Our faculties are

spiritually so blunt, as not to feel and profit by the mysterious and tender workings of the divine goodness.

Being man's Sovereign and knowing his essence perfectly, God can move and comfort man in his body and senses; He can even infuse into our organism, into our nerves, and our bones a thrill of happiness, as He did to some saints. – Sometimes, too, He does this to us, to a certain extent; and it is then that we receive those delicious moments of serenity, for which we vainly seek around us an apparent and created cause. Still God very seldom acts thus visibly. Usually it is to our mind, our reason, or our faith that He speaks and communicates Himself. It is only an inward austere comfort He gives us, and because we are too fond of worldly enjoyment, we do not appreciate it, we disdain it as disagreeable and ineffectual. How foolish we are!

Yes, how foolish we are! However, God who knows of what clay we are made, has had pity on us: "He humbled Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men and in habit found as a man."

Christ Jesus, the Word made flesh, God become man, will therefore be the comforter of our sufferings, will be our friend, will open His heart to our hearts. In Christ Jesus all is mystery for our feeble and doubtful reason; but among the problems raised by His human incarnation, the one which has always attracted me strongly, is why He chose to live a life of sorrow and suffering, why He chose to be the "man of sorrows."

In order to teach men faith and duty, to recall to them the old forgotten law, to raise again fallen human nature, it was not necessary for Christ to undergo suffering. To pay our debt to the justice of God the Father, the smallest act of reparation from God the Son would have sufficed.

However, He drank the chalice of atonement to the last drop.

Why?

Why did He suffer?

I see only one answer: He suffered in order to teach us how to suffer.

Therefore, O ye who suffer and do not know how to suffer, go to Him. Listen to His silent teaching from the crib to Calvary; saturate your soul with it, engrave it on your memory, cherish it and carry it nearest to your heart. It will be your strength, your energy, your courage. Saint Augustine calls us “the children of Calvary.” Yes, we are indeed the children of Calvary. ‘Tis there Christ begot us to His grace, and it is there He will yet shed in our weak and helpless hearts a power of resignation, which will enable them to look, without fear or fainting, upon the long series of miseries, sometimes painful, which flow in a human life.

How did Christ effect this?

He did not change the sad state of His creatures, nor remove their sufferings; but He took them upon Himself. “He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows.” He took up His cross and went to Golgotha. From that day suffering has become for man a glorious mark, a seal of Christian nobility.

Do not be sad if you suffer; you are called to the fellowship of His sufferings. With Him go to Calvary, ascend that rugged mountain; you will not take a step without finding the footprints of the Crucified. Not a tear of your eye, not a drop of your heart’s blood will fall without being mingled with the tears and the blood of Christ. See that forehead, those hands, those feet, that torn bosom, those red eyes, that pierced heart. If your forehead is as His, crowned with thorns, if your hands are as His, pierced, if your heart is as His, transfixed, rejoice, for you wear the marks of your king. “You are made conformable to His death.”

But Christ has not only made suffering glorious, He has made it happy. "I am filled with comfort"; "I exceedingly abound with joy in all my tribulations."

Worldlings fail to understand this. They do not see how one can love suffering. According to them it is folly; and the world has always held this belief, so that Saint Paul could truly exclaim: "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness."

It does not matter whether the world understands this or not. The fact is before us. At the foot of the cross a new race was born, a race which loves sorrow, which makes it the companion of its pilgrimage, which prefers it to pleasure. It prefers humility and contempt to glory, poverty and suffering to riches. That race has been perpetuated by a divine germination. Its growth continues in our day. Our voluptuous age still sees, as in the first centuries of the Church, penitents fond of suffering, because Christ has suffered; our independent and insubordinate age beholds men whose ambition it is to be obedient and contrite, because Christ annihilated Himself unto the death of the cross. Our age with its inordinate craving for wealth, sees many loving poverty, because Christ was poor. Who will deny this? And how is it then we do not recognize that Jesus Christ has put a charm into suffering, a charm of which perhaps some do not realize the attraction, but which others gather up and preserve.

You ask me the secret of this mysterious transformation. Here it is. It is love. Love which makes suffering for the Beloved sweet and dear, love risen from the fire of silent communications between the heart of the Divine Crucified and the poor mortal hearts that approach His cross.

Besides, let us not forget these comforting words of the apostle: "That of our tribulations which is at present light and momentary,

worketh for us, exceedingly above measure, an eternal weight of glory.”
“As ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.”

Ye who now suffer, shall reach soon those summits of life, whence the sight of the future inspires more sadness than hope. You shall have lost upon the way those enthusiastic illusions, those simple joys, those smiling dreams of the spring of life, for they shall all fade. The wind that blows upon your head is a chilling wind that strips the trees. You shall go down. Steep is the slope! – and then the end will come: its name is death. Ah! when life is so short, eternity so long, when death, at any moment, can cut our life’s thread and lay us in the grave, believe me, sweet it is to think that the share of suffering we have to endure here below, is a fruitful seed of happiness, cast in the soil of eternity.

Christians enjoy true peace when they rest in the arms of their loving Redeemer.

Jesus is Sentenced to Death

MEDITATION I

Sold by one of His chosen disciples, bound by the Roman pretorians, dragged from one judge to another by the Jews thirsting for His blood, though they cannot lay any crime to His charge, Christ Jesus is at last led before Pilate. Here below the supreme hope of the innocent is in Justice; so in the case of Jesus there was reason to hope in the integrity of a Roman magistrate. Pilate interrogates Him – he does not find in Him any guilt, as he twice proclaimed; he should then have set Him free; but no! the mob demands the death of Christ, and the mob is there, hateful, cruel, howling in the vestibule of the Pretorium. Pilate, already weak and yielding, has an inspiration of barbarous commiseration: “I shall have Him scourged,” he said within himself. “When they shall see Him bleeding, they shall have pity on Him.” And Jesus was fearfully scourged by the Roman soldiers, but the mob showed no pity. He must die. To Pilate, who was exasperated at so stubborn a hatred against the Just One, the priests said: “Be careful, if thou release this man, thou art not Caesar’s friend. For whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Caesar;” and Pilate, hearing these words, trembled and feared to lose his governorship, and delivered the Innocent One unto them to be crucified, saying: “I am innocent of the blood of this just man” and he washed his hands before the people. In the meantime Jesus was offering His hands to the soldiers who were to lead Him to execution.

The triumphant multitude now leap for joy, for they are about to see Christ die; they are urging the soldiers to proceed with their work. How the Jews, and especially the Pharisees exult, for they will now get rid of the preacher! Jesus hears all. He hears the calumnies of His accusers, the cowardly answers of Pilate, the insults of the crowd and its joyous shouts, and He holds His peace. Five days before, this same crowd had proclaimed Him their king: "Hosannah to the Son of David!" He now in vain looks for His apostles, whom He loved, whom He called His brethren. Peter, the chief? trembling before a woman, had denied Him three times: "I swear I do not know this man," he had said. Judas, the traitor, had hung himself. The others, at the first alarm, had fled and sought a place of concealment. "He holds His peace." He still seeks in the crowd for the sick He had cured, the blind to whom He had given sight, the lame whom He made to walk, the centurion whose servant He had healed, the widow of Nairn whose son He had raised to life. . . . Not one of them was there! Yes, there is a centurion; but he is busy seeing that the cross is made heavy enough; there are some women; yes, but with their hair dishevelled they also are shouting: "Let Him be crucified, and let His blood fall upon our children." Thus, is there no one among this crowd, who will speak for Christ? No one who remembers His favors? No one to voice the words of which the hill still holds the echo: "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; blessed is the womb that bore Thee and the paps that gave Thee suck"? Ho, no one is there to befriend him. Jesus is alone, betrayed, sold, abandoned, alone in the hand of His executioners; "and He holds His peace."

My God, how can I venture to compare our little sorrows to Thy exceedingly great anguish? We, too, have, in this world of ours, to drink from the chalice of calumny. We are sometimes charged with faults, the thought of which never entered our minds. Our most secret thoughts

are searched into, in order to discover therein intentions which we never conceived. Our words are misunderstood and their meanings perverted. Our friendships the most pure are given the aspect of base passions. What we do simply and without further thought we are said to do maliciously and shrewdly. We are the victims of envy. Let us endure these trials with patience, and, like Christ, let us know how to hold our peace. Let us calmly undergo slights, disparagement, contempt and insult. In comparison with what Christ underwent, what is all this but the shadow of His divine sufferings? Still He held His peace. Now, we too, have judges, the natural protectors and supporters of our rights. Their is either a father, a mother, a husband, a dear friend, whose esteem we hold deeper in our hearts than all else. Do these judge us well at all times? How often they even do not afford us any help, any succor! They believe the sayings of our enemies, slight us, condemn us, and even treat us with contempt. How often we have had to say, like David: "If my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it; and if he that hated me, had spoken great things against me, I would perhaps have hidden myself from him; but thou, a man of one mind, my guide, my familiar who didst take sweetmeats together with me . . . !" And, as on the lips of David, these sorrowful words have been interrupted by the sobbings of our hearts.

Let us hold our peace. I had been good to men, I had devoted myself to them. Now that I suffer, where are they? They have fled away. Who knows? Perhaps they have betrayed and sold me. I had loved, I had put all my heart in that love, I was living only for the one I loved. Day and night my thoughts were of him, and my work, my honor, my happiness, my life, my all were devoted to him. Where are those I loved! They have left me, along the way, as a broken vessel, the burden of which each thinks too heavy, and I am forsaken and alone.

Personally Jesus was innocent. Although He had taken on Himself the sins of all mankind, these sins could not be laid to His charge by Pilate. Before His judge and accusers, He stood spotless and blameless. But as for us, who complain of being accused, of being forsaken, are we like Him guiltless? Yes, perhaps we are guiltless of the charge that is against us; but for how many sins should we not have to blush, if they were not hidden in the inmost recesses of our hearts! Is there any man who would willingly appear before the world, exactly as he sees himself, in the solitude of his conscience, with all his hidden deeds, desires, regrets, thoughts and passions?

We should be judged, then, according to our deserts; and we grieve now, because some faults of ours, only one of our many faults, has been discovered and judged. Ah! if everything were known! Let us hold our peace, and under the condemnations of the world, let us bow our heads with patience, for *juste patimur* – “we suffer justly;” we richly deserve it. Jesus allowed Himself to be condemned; He endured all. Guiltless, He wished to expiate our faults: guilty, let us unite our expiation to His and let us commence by undergoing the sentence, like Him, without recrimination. Like Him, let us endure the desertion of our friends, the accusations of our enemies, their disdain, their betrayal; let us take this burden on our shoulders; for what is it in comparison with the burden, which is to be put upon Jesus!

Jesus is Laden with His Cross

MEDITATION 2

Everything is ready: the cross is finished, the Roman soldiers are armed. Proceed to Calvary. The multitude starts; children run, sing and cheer; they wish to see how a man suffers capital punishment. The chief priests and ancients of the people then follow, concealing under a serious exterior the secret joy of their souls. O ye, who cover with the veil of the divine name your bloody hatred, who justify, under the pretext of keeping the law and the prophets, your ignominious revenge, what did Christ commit against you?

And now comes the crowd which does not know what they do, the crowd which was paid, the crowd which spits upon Christ and embraces Barabbas. Christ, Thy time has come, go on! Soldiers hold the cross erect before putting it on His divine shoulder; it is upright, its black shadow can be contemplated. Suddenly, Jesus, as if aroused from a deep thought, sees it; His eyes beam, His lips smile, He opens His arms to it, He accepts it, He takes it upon His shoulder and He goes on. He goes to Calvary, He goes to death. The crowd shouts continually. Above this shouting is heard, now and then, the confused and dull noise of the mob uttering vulgar jokes, abjectly ridiculing Jesus. They eagerly push forward, jostling one another to feast their eyes on the suffering Saviour. These Jews, always ready to revolt against the Roman authority, these Jews trembling at the remembrance of the law and their fatherland, these Jews so anxious to shake off the Roman

yoke, these Jews so full of hate against Caesar, now cheer Caesar's soldiers, because they are to execute a Jew charged with preaching revolt against Caesar. In order to obtain the blood of Christ, they have suddenly become Caesar's most loyal subjects!

Jesus proceeds in silence on His way amid a shower of base insults and outrages. But what a lesson the Master is giving us! Let us take it now.

Suffering is our cross. How do we act when it is upon us? When it is yet far off, threatening us, and even long before it reaches us, we are distressed; we anticipate our sorrow, and thus add to its weight. Our imagination, straying away, supplies us with false pretexts of sorrow. How often have we shed tears for evils which never reached us! Vain and childish tears! Did Christ fear the gibbet, while the executioners were felling the tree, while they were making the cross, or when they were bringing it to place it on His shoulder? No; His thoughts, calm and resigned, were dwelling with love upon the Providence of His Father. Let us not anticipate or worry about the future, is not the present heavy enough? "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." The future belongs to God; He alone knows what it has in store for us. Whatever happens, happens because God wills or permits it. Let us rest in the arms of Divine Providence, placing our heart upon His heart, and let us draw close to Him, "like chickens under the wings" of the hen. Now when the cross is offered to Jesus, how gladly He welcomes it! And we, what do we do? We close our eyes so as not to see our cross, we turn our heads aside, we flee from it; but it follows

us, it reaches us, and we stumble and fall under its weight. Let us be strong. Sorrowful as life may be, God proportions suffering according to our strength. Let us not exaggerate our pain, in order to excuse our weakness. Let us look straight at the cross, as it stands erect before us, remembering that everything here below, even sorrow and suffering, live but one day.

Jesus Falls the First Time

MEDITATION 3

Under the weight of the cross, Jesus proceeds on His way. From the moment when, at Gethsemane, the soldiers led by Judas? had arrested Him, and even since the Last Supper, He had tasted neither food nor drink. Restless and in many ways tormented, He had spent a terrible night; He had undergone the examination before Annas, been led away to Caiphas, and in the morning to Pilate; Pilate had sent Him to Herod. Sent back to Pilate, He had been most cruelly scourged, buffeted, and crowned with thorns. Finally with blood flowing from His fair head, He had taken up the cross. But very soon, notwithstanding His courage, He becomes weak: His breast heaves, His feet, a long time controlled by His will, stronger than His sorrow, falter at last; He trembles, His knees bend, He totters, He falls to the ground with the cross upon Him.

Then there is a stir in the mob: they fear their victim will escape crucifixion. Seeing, however, that Christ is still living, they feel relieved and again begin to outrage Him. Roughly the soldiers raise Him, and, devoid of pity, they again place the cross on His shoulder and push Him forward. Jesus, weak, pale, and bleeding goes on.

To take up our cross valiantly, to accept sorrow when God offers us its bitter chalice, is the part of a great soul. 'Tis the first step toward Calvary, the way all Christian souls must go, painful as it may be. The excitement of the first hour, the enthusiasm always inspired by a great cause, the consciousness of doing something great and noble, naturally serve as incentives to be heroic enough to accept our trials. At first glance, there are few human hearts which are not ready to become martyrs. But there is something more difficult and painful than a short martyrdom; and that is a protracted and permanent sorrow. When our transient enthusiasm has vanished, when we are face to face, as it were, with our persistent cross, how weak are we not! To suffer but one day or two, is endurable; but to suffer for weeks, months, years, always the same pain, the same anguish, is too much for our frail will; we soon fall exhausted.

Question that poor soul wounded and fallen, and she will answer with tears: "Tis too much suffering; why does not God let me die; yes, it would be better for me to die." May God prevent me from rebuking any one on account of this weakness of will, since Christ Himself fell to encourage us; . . . but it was neither the will of the Master, nor His heart that gave way; His body alone became exhausted. As for us, on the contrary, both our body and our soul fall, and even our will, our energy weaken and give way. O my Divine Master, how well Thou understandest our poor hearts! Thou knowest how weak we are; Thou knowest that our strength is only as a transitory glimmer which shines today and fades tomorrow; consequently, Thou doest not wonder to see us so weak, and our falls do not turn Thee away from us. Thou hast had pity on us, Thou hast fallen like us. But, Jesus, Thou didst rise immediately! As for us, do we rise again? Are we to remain prostrate in the dust, without trying to rise and start again? Oh human soul, arise, try again, take thy cross as Christ took his and proceed on thy way.