

LESSONS OF SORROW

Thoughts on Our Lady's Dolours

By FATHER FABER

(Abridged from *The Foot of the Cross: or, The Sorrows of Mary*)

THE FIRST DOLOUR

The Prophecy of Holy Simeon

In this First Dolour we consider how Our Lady, with St. Joseph, took her new-born Jesus to the Temple to present Him to His Heavenly Father: There, to her lifelong woe, she heard Simeon's prophetic words: "This child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce."

This first dolour was a lifelong unhappiness. Unhappiness is not without mystery even in a fallen world. For is not the whole world full of God everywhere, and can there be unhappiness in the neighbourhood of God? Yet the unhappiness of the world is real. Almost every heart on earth is a sanctuary of secret sorrow. **With immense numbers unhappiness is literally lifelong**, one out of which there is no possible escape except through the single door of death. To much suffering time brings no healing. The broken heart lies bleeding in the hand of its Heavenly Father. He will look to it. No one else can. It is astonishing how shallow all human consolation is.

What is to be done with this lifelong sorrow? Let Our Lady teach us. Her sorrows were lifelong. This was the characteristic the first dolour impressed upon them. She suffered without seeking consolation. She suffered without needing to lean on human sympathy. She suffered in silence. She suffered in joy. Let., us put this aside, not as inimitable; the time will come when we shall be able to imitate even these things; but let us put aside as beyond us now. But she had no suffering which was dissociated from the Passion of Jesus. **We can make our sorrows in a measure like Our Lady's by continually uniting them to the sorrows of our dearest Lord**, If our sorrow' comes from sin, of course it cannot be like Mary's sorrows; but it can be just as easily, just as acceptably, united with the Passion of Our Lord. He will not despise the offerings. Like Mary, we must be loving, sweet, and patient with those who cause us any unhappiness: let us think quietly of God and heaven. It is not a slight consolation for lifelong mourners to know that Our Blessed Lady was a lifelong mourner too. Our sorrows may not be one, but many. They may come on guard, like sentinels, one following the other. Unhappiness is like a secret subterranean world. We are perpetually walking over it without knowing it; and so seeming unkind and thoughtless one to another, when in our hearts we are not really so. Jesus has a special love for the unhappy. The longest day has its evening, the hardest work its' ending, and the sharpest pain its contented and everlasting rest.

Another lesson which we learn from this first sorrow of Mary is that **the highest use of God's gifts is to give them back to Him again**. Nothing is in reality our own, except our sin. God is jealous of anything like a proprietary feeling, even in the gifts of nature; but in respect of the gifts of grace this jealousy is increased a thousandfold. We must make Him the depository of His own gifts, because we do not know how to use them rightly. We must be like children who bid their father keep the little treasures which he himself has given. So with the gifts of God. They are more ours when in His keeping than in our own. Nothing good is meant to stay with us. It would not keep good. It would spoil. Every creature is a channel through which things find their way back to God. Moreover our humility is always in peril if we detain a gift of God, even if it were for no longer than to look it in the face and love it, and then think of it with complacency when it is gone. We must refer everything to God,—it is the secret of being holy. Graces are always coming; like the people in the streets, there is no end to them, sometimes a thinning, never a break. So we could be always praising God, always sending back to Him, when we have humbly kissed them, the gifts and graces He has sent us. Besides which, God and His gifts are two very different things. Sometimes He feigns as if He would overreach us, in order to try our love. He sends us some very heavenly gift, and then watches to see if we will it for

Himself. But the soul that loves truly can never fall into this mistake. It must reach God, nothing short of God. It keeps giving back His gifts, as if in constant protest that, needful as they are, they are not Himself, and cannot stand in His stead.

Another lesson is that in this world **sorrow is the recompense** of sanctity. It is to the elect on earth what the Beatific Vision is to the saints in heaven. It is God's presence, His manifestation of Himself, His unfailing reward. We must not be amazed therefore, if new efforts to serve God bring new sorrows in their train. Yet we need not fear that they will be disproportioned to our strength. Our crosses are poised to a nicety by divine wisdom, and then divine love planes them, in order to make them at once smoother and lighter. When sorrows come, even while the thrill goes through us, we feel that we are almost handling with our hands our own final perseverance, such solid evidence are they of our adoption. A heart without sorrows is like a world without a revelation. It has nothing but a twilight of God about it.

Furthermore, our sorrow must be our own. We must not expect anyone else to understand it. Sorrow is the most individual thing in the whole world. We must not expect therefore to meet with sympathy at all adequate to what we are suffering. It is a very desolate thing to have leaned on sympathy, and found that it would not bear our weight. It is best therefore to keep our sorrows as secret as we can. God knows everything: there are volumes of comfort in that. God means everything: there is light for every darkness out of that simple truth. Our hearts are full of angels when they are full of sorrows. Let us make them our company and go on our road, smiling, scattering sweetness. Who can comfort like those who also mourn?

We must expect also that it will be in some measure with us as it was with Mary: our sorrows will be fed even by our joys. In all manner of strange ways joys turn to sorrows, sometimes suddenly, sometimes gradually. But in truth in a world where we can sin, in a dwelling which is rather an exile than a home, all joys are akin to sorrows, nay are almost sorrows in holyday attire. Joy is life looking like what it is not. Sorrow is life with an honest face. It is life looking like what it is. Nevertheless **there is the truest, the heavenliest of all joys in sorrow, because it detaches us from the world**, and draws us with such quiet, persuasive, irresistible authority of God. To turn joys into sorrows is the sweet safe task of earth, to turn sorrows into joys is the true work of heaven, and of that height of grace which is heaven on earth already.

There is still another lesson. We must all enter into this dolour in life. The characteristic of Mary's sorrow is that Jesus caused it. But this is not peculiar to *her* affliction. Jesus will be a cause of blessed sorrow to every one of us. There are very many happy earthly things which we must sacrifice for Him; or if we have not the heart to do so, He will have the kind cruelty to take them from us. Persecution is a word of many meanings, a thing of countless shapes. It must come infallibly to everyone who loves our dearest Lord. Who was ever let alone to serve Jesus as he wished? It is idle to expect it. O poor, poor world! And it is always the good who are the worst in this respect. Outside of us, beside this inevitable persecution, Our Lord will bring trials and crosses round us, at once to preserve our grace and to augment it. The more we love Him, the thicker they will be. Thus Jesus is in us a cause of sorrow, in us He is a sign to be contradicted, in us He is set free for the rise and fall of many.

THE SECOND DOLOUR

The Flight into Egypt

In this Second Dolour we consider how Jesus, to escape the cruelty of Herod, had to be taken with His Mother into Egypt by St. Joseph. There Our Lady lived in patient exile, suffering the sufferings of her Jesus.

This dolour contains many lessons. We must learn first of all to sympathise with Jesus, especially in the sufferings which we ourselves have caused Him, Religion is a personal love of God, the sincerity of which is tested by our obedience. It is the love which is the soul, the value, the significance of it all. It will not do merely to believe a number of doctrines, or to keep certain commandments. These things are essential but they do not make up the whole. They are the flesh and the blood, but the soul is love. Now the chief way in which we create this charmed atmosphere around ourselves is by devotion to the mysteries of Our Blessed Lord. Mary sanctified herself in this dolour by

sympathy with Jesus. The grand thing at which we must aim is to bring it to pass that Our Lord's mysteries, His Passion and Childhood especially, should be continually in our thoughts. They should not be in the least like some past history, about which we may feel poetical or sentimental, or have favourite views. But they should be as if they were living, contemporaneous, going on perpetually before our eyes, and in which we ourselves are actors. The mysteries of the Incarnate Word in the New Testament are our life. They do not simply remain written there and shine. They live, they put forth attractions, they give power, they hold grace, they transform. The vitality of the Incarnation has gone into them. So by assiduous meditation, by sorrowing love or by rejoicing love, we must wear our way into the mysteries of Jesus, assimilating them to ourselves, until their mere character of history has added to itself the reality of a worship, and His Heart as it were beats in ours, as another better, and supernatural life.

A further lesson which this dolour teaches us is that suffering, when it is God's will, is better than external spiritual advantages. To believe that because it is Our Lord's will, suffering is therefore better for us than even the continuation of those advantages, requires a large exercise of faith. Experience has amply disclosed to us how much depends on regularity in our spiritual exercises. Many a man leans his whole life on his daily Mass. Is there a more helpless being on earth than the soul long used to frequent Communion and then suddenly and for a length of time deprived of it? Besides, how many people do we see who are the better for suffering? Does it not harden many? Guillore says sickness unsanctifies more than it sanctifies: Cardinal de Bérulle, speaking of interior sufferings and trials of spirit, said he had known many eminent souls in them and he had only seen one who had not retrograded under their influence. And yet, in spite of all these terrible sayings and experiences, we are to welcome suffering from God as better than hours of prayer, or the daily sacrifices, or heavenly sacraments. It is a hard lesson to learn. Who does not remember the first time he had to learn it? But for the time it was learned. Self-distrust was deepened; we got nearer to God; we had grown in the inner man; we were more real, because we were more interior; and we were conscious of additional power, because grace was more at home in us.

Our Lady's conduct in this dolour teaches us the additional lesson that we must aim most at compassion for others when we are suffering most ourselves. This is the way to gain the peculiar graces of suffering. Grace and nature are almost always at cross purposes: Because Moses had the hastiest of tempers, he became the meekest of men. So sorrow naturally shuts us up in ourselves and concentrates us upon itself, while grace forces us to become more considerate because we are suffering, and to go out of ourselves, and to pour out upon others, as a libation before God, all that tenderness and pity which nature would make us lavish upon ourselves. There is something in diverting ourselves from ourselves when we are in grief, which has a peculiar effect of enlarging the heart, and swelling the dimensions of the whole character, and something also so particularly pleasing to God that, when it is done from a supernatural motive and in imitation of Our Lord, He seems to recompense it instantly by the most magnificent graces. To sit by the bed-side of a poor invalid, when we are ourselves inwardly prostrated by illness,—or again to listen by the hour to the little complaints of a heart ill at ease, while we ourselves are secretly groaning under a still heavier load,—or to throw out joy and light, by tone, by look, by manner, by smile, over a circle dependent upon us, when uneasy cares are secretly gnawing at our hearts,—these are the grand ventures in the commerce of grace. One hour of such work as that is often worth a month of prayer, and who does not know the enormous value of a month of prayer? Moreover, it is the want of this forcible unselfishness which makes sorrow generally so much less sanctifying than Christian principles would lead us to expect. We almost look upon suffering as a sort of dispensation from charity. Self has no place anywhere in love. When love touches self, it either becomes a duty or is an unworthiness. It is true also that sorrow draws us into solitude, but not an uncharitable, selfish solitude. It guides us gently away from the world as a theatre of worldliness, but not from the world as a field of mutual and self-sacrificing love. When the saints keep their sorrows secret, we may be sure that unselfishness was a reason for their secrecy. They would not spread sorrow in the world. There was too much of it already. If they could help it, their particular griefs should never unwear a single smile from any face on earth. Our sorrows must be measured by our sympathy with others. Our active, cheerful, quiet, unobtrusive ministries to others must be the invariable index of the keenness of our martyrdom.

We learn also from the Flight into Egypt that we must not question the ways of God, either in our own sufferings or in the gifts of those we love. There is something not uncommon about religious people which is very difficult to

define but which looks like irreverence. Of course it is not so. But persons who have habits of prayer and do not with sufficient exactness and recollection extend those habits into the actions of the rest of the day, unintentionally acquire a sort of familiarity with God which is not altogether respectful to Him. They think that if they pray more to God than others, they must necessarily know more of God than others. These men put themselves upon intimate terms with God, and, especially if their prayer is the prayer of sentiment, acquire a habit of thinking of God and themselves, not of God alone. The results of this betray themselves in times of sorrow. The submission of such men is not instantaneous. In fact they question the ways of God, and so lose the childlike spirit of sanctity. Men may not *assail* God, even with the impetuosity of their prayers.

But there is comfort even here. God knows our weakness. We think no one can enter into it as we do, but he knows it infinitely better. He practises the most incredible forbearance towards us. He makes the most unimaginable allowances. Woe unto us if we should venture to make excuses for ourselves, if it were but the thousandth part of the excuses He makes for us! But we have yet another lesson to learn. We spend the most of our lives in the Holy Land, in quietness and at home. Either we are in the Holy City, or in Nazareth, or by the blue water of Gennesareth. But sometimes we have to go down into Egypt to buy the wholesome corn of tribulation, the best sustenance of our souls. Now the lesson is that, whatever and wherever we are, we always have Jesus with us. No time is inconvenient for Him, no place unlikely. There is no darkness but He is the light, no light but its best light is He. Alas! that a truth so sweet to be remembered, should so easily be forgotten! Yet who does not forget it? Who is not always forgetting it? Could Mary forget Him when she bore Him in her arms? Why should we? It is easy to leave Jesus if we let Him run by our side over the sands and forget His presence; but if we carry Him in our arms, as love and Mary do, it requires much evil courage to lay our burden down upon the sand and wilfully walk away. He is ever with us; and He is with us ever as a child, partly that the burden may be lighter, partly that love may come more easily, partly because His littleness better suits our own. There is but one true symbol of the Christian soul: it is truly, and forever, a Madonna and Child.

THE THIRD DOLOUR **The Three Days' Loss of Jesus**

In this Third Dolour we consider how Our Lady, having gone with Jesus and St. Joseph to Jerusalem for the Paschal Feast, lost her Jesus on the journey home. For three days, with St. Joseph, she sought Him, sorrowing; and at length they found Him in the Temple, busied about the business of His Heavenly Father.

This dolour is so full of lessons for ourselves that it is difficult to select from them. It teaches us, first of all, that the loss of Jesus, however brief, is the greatest of all evils. The greatness of Mary's sorrow is to us a visible measure of the magnitude of the evil. Yet alas! how little we feel it! We should have thought the loss of Jesus was in itself so fearful an evil that nothing could have aggravated it; and yet our want of perception of the greatness of our loss is a token of still deeper misery. It is sad indeed when the voice of the world is more musical in our ears than the voice of Our Lord. It is just the very wretchedness, the very hatefulness of the world, that it has no Jesus. He does not belong to it. He refused to pray for it. He and it are incompatible. Would He wish to please people round Him who are taking no pains whatever to please His Father?

Alas! sin is bad; excess of pleasure is bad; giving God the second place is bad; worshipping the rich is bad; hardening our Christian feelings to become accustomed to worldly frivolities and very slightly uncharitable conversation is bad. But these at least are evils which wear no masks. We know what we are about. We give up Jesus with the full understanding of the sacrifice we are making. But wishing to please!—this is the danger to a spiritual person. Total separation from Christ is already implied in the very idea. What is it we wish to please? The world, which is the enemy of Jesus. Yet we see no evil. We want smoothness, polish, inoffensiveness, discreet keeping back of God. He said that He and Mammon would not dwell together. But to some extent we will force Him so to dwell. High principles gently lower themselves, or are kept for state occasions such as Lent or a priest's company. There begin to be symptoms of two distinct lives going to be lived by us; but we do not see these symptoms ourselves.

Trying to please is a slumberous thing. So we drift on, never suspecting how far the current is carrying us away from God.

Thus we may lose Jesus in three ways. We may abruptly break from Him by sin. We may quietly and gracefully withdraw from Him, confessing the attractions of the world to be greater than His. We may retire from Him slowly and by imperceptible degrees, always with our face towards Him, as we withdraw from royalty, and all because He is not a fixed principle with us, and the desire to please is so. But if we have lost Him in any of these three ways,—sin, worldliness, and the love of pleasing,—and He rouses us by His grace, what are we to do? This third dolour teaches us. It must be a dolour to us. We must search for Him whom we have lost. We must put off everything else in order to prosecute our search. Other things must be subordinate to it. But we must not be precipitate in our search. We must not run, we must walk. We shall miss Him if we run. We must not do violent things, not even to ourselves. It is not a time for taking up new penances. The loss of Jesus is penance enough, now that we have found it out. We must be gentle, and sorrow will give us gentleness. We must seek Jesus also in the right place, in Jerusalem, in the temple,—that is, in the Church, and in the sacraments, and in prayer. We must be of good cheer. Everything has its remedy. Even worldliness is curable, and it is by far the nearest to incurable of any of our diseases. If our whole life has been but a desire to please, we must not be cast down. To change the habit is too difficult. We will change the object. It shall be Jesus instead of the world. Who ever knew people more thoroughly all for God than some who were once notably all for the world?

We must, however, so also this dolour teaches us, be on our guard against a temptation which is likely to assail us in our search. We soon lose the feeling of guilt in the feeling of beginning to be good again. It is part of the shallowness of our nature. We shall be drawn to attribute the loss of Jesus to some mysterious supernatural trial which God is sending us and the coming of which is itself an index of our goodness. Alas! the truth is, our own changeableness is so great that it is incredible even to ourselves except at the moment of the turn, when we see it with our eyes. Let us not take any grand views of supernatural chastisements. They are rare, and they are not for such as we are. Simply, we have sinned, and we are being punished for it. It is our punishment to have to search for Him who once dwelt with us and only left us reluctantly. Let us be sure that everything about us is very commonplace. We have lost Jesus, not in a mystical darkness of soul, but in the weakness of a worldly heart: we shall find Him, not in a vision, but in the resumption of our old prayers, in the frequentation of the old sacraments.

It is true there is a loss of Jesus which is not altogether our fault, which is half trial as well as half punishment. It is not so much a loss of Him as a veiling of His Face. There is perhaps no infallible way of knowing when this disappearance of Jesus is our own fault. Perhaps it is always in some measure our own fault. Even then we must not be passive, even then we must sorrow, even then we must search. We must not wait for Him to come back to us; we must go and find out where He is. But, till we find Him, do not let us seek for consolation, either from our guides or from ourselves, least of all from the sympathy of creatures or the comforts of earth; He is our only true consolation. It would be the saddest of things if we were consoled by anything but the finding of Him!

THE FOURTH DOLOUR **Meeting Jesus with the Cross**

In this Fourth Dolour we consider how Our Lady met her Jesus on the way to Calvary, as He carried there the heavy cross laid upon Him by our sins; she followed Him to the summit of death, her heart torn with His grief.

This fourth dolour gives us many lessons. All the dolours have led us through strange realities; for it is the way of sorrow, above all other things in human life, even more than love, to make the things which lie around it peculiarly solid. But in this dolour our realities grow more real. They gain a new reality from being integral parts of that last tremendous drama which the salvation of the world was accomplished at an incalculable cost of pain and shame and agony. We have seen Mary's sufferings almost pass into His, and His revert to her. Have we no participation in this reality? Yes! We ourselves were part of our Mother's Dolours, because we were an actual part of our Saviour's Passion. Thus they cease to be mere matters of history to us. We were agents then, not simply spectators now. There is

guilt attaching to us; and the sorrow which comes of guilt and shame is another thing from that which comes of gratuitous pity or affectionate compassion. It tells differently on our intercourse with our Blessed Mother. It makes our devotion part of our penance. This devotion is one in which justice is concerned and into which duties flow. Forgiven love knows what it has to do. We were cruel to our Mother, and when we had wounded her, and the weapon was yet in our hands, she pressed us to her bosom. Seven times we took part in her chief mysteries of grief. But seventy-times-seven would not nearly express the sum of graces which she has obtained for our barren and thankless souls. Ah! if we have been realities to her in those days of her dolours, is it not the least we can do, to let her dolours now be realities to us?

Every morning of life we go forth to encounter a new day. Would it not be an unproductive day in which we did not meet Our Lord? For is not that the very meaning of our lives? But we require this fourth dolour to admonish us that we must rarely expect to meet Our Lord except with the Cross, and that a new one. When we are in sorrow, He Himself draws near and goes with us. That is the privilege of sorrow. It is an attraction to our dearest Lord which He can seldom resist. Provided we seek not other comfort, He is sure to draw near and comfort us Himself. Oh! if unwary souls did but know the graces which they miss by telling their griefs and letting their fellow-creatures console them! What cross we shall meet to-day, we know not. But we know that, if we meet Jesus, we shall meet a cross, and evening will find us with the burden on our backs.

Some men meet Him, and turn away. Faith and love have made some men too timid to pass Him or avoid Him, but they have expostulated with Him about the Cross and have wept out loud when He persisted. Some follow in sullenness and drag their cross, and it jolts upon the stones and hurts them all the more, and they fall, but their falls are not in union with those of His upon the old Way of the Cross. Few kneel down with the alacrity of a glad surprise, and kiss His feet and take the Cross off His back, and shoulder it almost playfully, and walk by His side, smiling. This is what we should do. Can we do it? No! but we can try, and then He will do it in us. So let us not miss our opportunity, but take up our cross at once, and follow Him: for so only shall we fall into the Procession of the Predestinate.

But this dolour tells us more still. It teaches us that long rest is the ground in front of great crosses. The greater the peace now, the greater the cross presently. Out of three-and-thirty years twenty-one ran out between the last dolour and the Passion. How often does the same thing happen to ourselves! He who forgets that the cross is coming, wastes his quiet. He misses the ends for which the calm was sent him, and renders himself less able to bear the cross when it comes. There could be no lukewarmness or self-trust, no falling back, no idle loitering, if only we remembered that the seeming quiet was merely the hush before the coming of a greater cross. It would then be to us at once a period of rest in God and yet of ardent preparation for a new and different manifestation of Him which we know will break upon us like a storm and be a serious trial of our worth.

This dolour also prepares us for another trial which is by no means infrequent in the experience of the cross. We never seem to need our Blessed Lord's consoling presence and kind words more than when He has just loaded us with another cross. Nature groans under the burden and becomes faint. If at the same moment our supernatural life becomes a cross to us also, how shall we bear it? We meet Jesus. He gives us our new cross without a word; even, so it seems, without a blessing. We are like servants with a master. We have simply to do His will without any further directions than a sign. No confidence is imparted to us. No cheerful words of encouragement are uttered. There is no token that He is pleased or displeased with us, no token that we are doing Him a service in accepting this new cross, no token that He is other than indifferent whether we carry it or not. We have simply the material obedience to perform. He could not treat us other-wise if we were mere machines. It is a peculiar trial, for which there is no possible preparation but love. The more we love Jesus, the more confidence shall we feel in His love of us; and while our humility will not be surprised by any show of indifference when something far worse than that is merited by our vileness, our love will enable us to go on with a quiet suffering cheerfulness, convinced that the love of His Heart and the look of His Face are telling different tales.

We must also be prepared to find that one cross leads to another, and little crosses to great ones. For the most part crosses do not come single. Sometimes we suddenly pass into a region of crosses, just as the earth traverses a region of shooting stars at certain periods of the year.

Some men have one lifelong cross to carry, and other crosses do not appear to be added to it. But even then it is

much the same as if there were new crosses; for the burden is not equable. The lifelong cross, even when most equable and unaccompanied by other crosses, is the hardest of all trials to bear. There is so much mutability in our nature that even a change of punishment from sharp to sharper is in effect a relaxation. The dreadful thing to nature is to be tied down to a persevering uniformity. It is in this that the secret heroism of vows resides. He who carries one cross for years and carries it to his grave must either be one of God's hidden saints or must lie in low attainments as near to lukewarmness as is compatible with the salvation of his soul.

But sometimes the one lifelong cross remains always as the abiding foundation of a -very edifice of crosses, which God is forever building up and pulling down and building up again, upon the old enduring cross, without ever shifting that. This unites the two sufferings of monotony and change together. Such sufferers are men of power; for it is to the secret intercessions of such souls that all spiritual renewals on the earth are owing. In them we see in fullest revelation the grand truth, which is true also in its measure of the very lowest of ourselves, that the cross is never only a chastisement but always a reward as well, and the plentifulness of God's love to each created soul is measured by the abundance of its crosses.

There is one lesson yet to be learned from this dolour. Jesus and Mary were both going one way: could it be any other way than the road to heaven? Yet the road they were travelling led over Calvary. Hence we infer that no one's face is towards heaven when it is not towards Calvary. In life, whether we know it or not, we are always travelling to a sorrow. At the next turn of the road stands an unforeseen death of some one whom we love, or the breaking up of a circle in which it seems as if our very existence were bound up, or some disgrace which we never reckoned on.

Sometimes, however, we do see the sorrow towards which we are travelling. Perhaps this is the most common case. We know that an illness is almost sure to return. Or we are bending over a sister or a child, in whom consumption is eating its fatal way. A loss we cannot bear to think of is thus continually impending. In the majority of instances these foreseen sorrows are more sanctifying than the unforeseen. Life grows softer under the shadow, heavenlier during the eclipse of earth. O happy are they, did they but know it, who have a visible sorrow always waiting them a little further on the road! So has the path been garnished of by far the greatest number of the predestinate.

Thus the fourth dolour contains within itself the whole science and mystery of cross-bearing.

THE FIFTH DOLOUR **The Crucifixion of Jesus**

In this Fifth Dolour we consider how Our Lady stood in silent fortitude beside the Cross during the three hours' agony of her Jesus, helping Him to die.

The last dolour taught us how to carry our crosses, this one how to stand by them. We must not leave the Cross. We must not come down from Calvary until we are crucified, and then the Cross and ourselves will have become inseparable. But Calvary is a great place for impatience. Many have the courage to march up the hill. But when they get there, they lay their cross on the ground and go down again into the city. Some are stripped and then leave, refusing to be nailed. Some are nailed but unfasten themselves before the elevation. Some stand the shock of the elevation and then come down from the cross. In truth the world is full of deserters from Calvary, so full that politic or disdainful grace seems to take no trouble to arrest them. For grace crucifies no one against his will. Men appear to believe that to breathe the fresh air on the top of Calvary for half a minute is to act upon them like a charm. Crucifixion, like a plunge in the cold sea, the briefer it is, will have the healthier glow and the more sensible reaction. But unfortunately it is not so. Sorrow is a slow workman, and crucifixion a long business. But all this is by no means agreeable to rapid, impulsive nature. O then for the grace to remain our three full hours on the top of Calvary! Can there be a sadder sight on earth than those half-crucified souls we meet in all companies, so strangely out of place, such mournful monuments of the impatience of nature and the jealousy of grace?

God is very exacting. They who love Him can say so without loving Him less. He is not content with our remaining on Calvary our three full hours. When we are not nailed to our cross, we must stand. There must be no

sitting,- no lying down, no leaning on our cross. Indeed, kneeling is not so good as standing. We go there to suffer, not to worship. Our suffering will turn into worship. We are not to adore our cross, or say fine words about-it, or put ourselves into sentimental attitudes before it. We are to do the commonplace thing of standing by it, which is the posture of men. There are souls whose Way of the Cross is full of promise, and yet who spoil everything on the top of Calvary. Perhaps if they had been crucified at once, they might have done well. But that was not God's Will. Waiting has unmanned them. They have sat down. Or they have knelt to pray that the cross might pass from them. Foolish souls! that belongs to Gethsemane, not to Calvary. Or the preparations frighten them,—the digging of the fosse, the repointing of the nails, the flourishes of the hammer. Is it not better to go down from Calvary, in the honest confession of our cowardice, than to behave so weakly on the summit of that sacred hill? O no! it is better far to stay. Better a reluctant crucifixion than none at all. Only let us be crucified,—gracefully, if it may be, but ungracefully rather than not at all.

Why do so many fail? Because they are not silent. Endurance depends much on silence, Power escapes with words. It is only by the help of the grace of silence that the saints carry such heavy crosses. A cross for which we have received sympathy is far heavier than it was before. Silence is the proper atmosphere of the cross, and secrecy its native climate. The best crosses are secret ones, and we may be silent under those that are not secret. Indeed silence creates a sort of secrecy even in public. For at least we can hide how much we suffer, if we cannot hide altogether the fact that we are suffering. In some way or other human sympathy desecrates the operations of grace. It mingles a debasing element with that which is divine. The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, gives His best consolations only to the inconsolable of earth. They to whom God is not enough by Himself, but must have comforting creatures mixed with Him, will never find out their sad mistake; for to them God will never open those treasures which will show them how different He is from creatures.

But all this is hard to nature. Nature never yet breathed freely on the top of Calvary. It is very hard to put away all consolation from ourselves. Sympathy seems often to be just that which makes our pain endurable. Well then! let us go down a step lower. Let us not put it away, but do not let us ask it. Let it find us out without our seeking. As the world goes, we shall not greatly imperil what is divine in our sorrows by being simply passive about sympathy. But even this passiveness is hard. How should it be anything else but hard when it is part of our crucifixion? It is Calvary's hardest lesson. Let us take it to ourselves although we fear it; neither let us be cast down because we fear. Who ever did anything well which he had not first feared to do?

But there is a true consolation, deeply bidden indeed, yet near at hand, in this putting away of human consolation. It is in the darkness of nature that we realise the vicinity of. Jesus. It is in the absence of creatures that we are held up in the sensible embrace of the Creator. Creatures are for ever in our way, intercepting graces, hiding God. We often wish our lives were more divine. But they are in fact much more divine than we believe. It is sorrow which reveals this to us. It comes like a shroud around us. Then by degrees the white figure of Jesus comes out in the dim obscurity. We feel the warm blood on our hands as we grasp the Cross. It is no apparition: it is life. We are with God, with our Creator, with our Saviour. He is all our own. The withdrawal of creatures has made Him so. But He has not come. He was always there, always thus within our souls, only He was overpowered with the false brightness of creatures.

But the couching of our spiritual sight is not the only operation which the senses of our soul undergo on Calvary. All souls are hard of hearing with respect to the sounds of the invisible world. The inner ear is opened upon Calvary. The sounds of Jerusalem travel up to us through the darkness, and perhaps the sounds of labour in the gardens near. But they rise up as admonitions rather than as distractions. They come to us softly and indistinctly, and do not jar with the silence of our endurance or the low whisperings of prayer. Least of all do they muffle the clearness of Our Saviour's words when He vouchsafes to speak. Down below, how the world deafened us! We knew that Jesus was at our sides, and yet we could not converse with Him. It was like trying to listen when the loud wheels are rattling harshly along the streets. It is only on Calvary that earth is subdued enough to make music with heaven.

We see but two things on Calvary: Jesus and Mary. And from each we learn a lesson, one about our own deaths, and one about the deaths of others. Jesus vouchsafes to teach us how to die. If Jesus in His great hour would have His Mother by Him, how shall we dare to die without her? In all things we must imitate Jesus, although it be in a sphere so infinitely below Him. But most of all it is of importance to us to imitate Him in His death. It was there at that

deathbed, that she became our Mother. There is surely not one of us into whose mouth faith does not many times a day put that universal prayer the prayer of the pope and the peasant, of the doctor and the scholar, of the rich and the poor, of the religious and the secular,—that the Mother of God may assist us in the hour of death. But we must imbed this petition into all our prayers. Let us leave to God, without dictation or even wish, the time and place and manner of our death, so only that it be not an unprovided death, and above all things not unprovided with Mary. Let us have Mary. Let it be an agreement of long standing, a pledge not to be broken, that she shall be present to conduct. for us a ceremonial so difficult and yet of such unutterable import. What is a good life worth if it be not crowned by a good death? Yet a good life is the nearest approach in our power to a good death. A good life is the likeliest of all things to bring Mary to our bedsides in that hour. A cross-bearing life is for ever meeting Mary. At crucifixions she is present as it were officially. If Jesus would not die without her, she will love us all the more if we refuse to do so either. Blessed above all the dead are those whose eyes Mary herself has closed!

Such is the lesson which Jesus teaches us about our own deaths. We learn one from Mary about the deaths of others. It is, that devotion for those in their last agony is a Mary-like devotion, and most acceptable to her Immaculate Heart. There is not a moment of the day or night in which that dread pomp of dying is not going on. Can any appeal to our charity be more piteously eloquent than this? When we think of all that Mary has done for each of those souls, when we call to mind the long train of graces which she has brought to every one of them, and consequently the yearning of her maternal heart for their final perseverance and everlasting salvation, we may form some idea of the gratefulness of this devotion to her. The deathbed is one of her peculiar spheres. She seems to exercise quite a peculiar jurisdiction over it. It is there that she so visibly co-operates with Jesus in the redemption of mankind. But she seeks for us to co-operate with her also. She would fain draw our hearts with hers, our prayers to hers. Is she not the one Mother of us all? Are not the dying our brothers and sisters in the sweet motherhood of Mary? The family is concerned. We must not coldly absent ourselves. We must assist in spirit at every death that is died the whole world over, deaths of heretics and heathens as well as Christians. We shall one day lie in the same strait, and need unspeakably the same charitable prayers. The measure which we mete to others shall be measured to us again. This is the divine rule of retribution. Nothing will prepare a smoother deathbed for ourselves than a lifelong daily devotion to those who are daily dying. By prayerful thoughts, by pious practices, by frequent ejaculations, by the usages the Church has indulged, let us win a bright and gentle end for ourselves by following Mary everywhere to the deathbeds she attends.

THE SIXTH DOLOUR

Jesus Taken Down from the Cross

In this Sixth Dolour we consider how Our Lady received into her arms the dead Body of her Jesus, and beheld with grief and adoration its sacred blood-stained Wounds.

We learn two lessons for ourselves in this sixth dolour. Our Lady is at once a model to us of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and a model also of behaviour in time of grief. As our Blessed Lord is daily offered in the Mass and the self-same sacrifice of Calvary continued and renewed without intermission day and night around the world, so are Mary's ministries to His mute yet adorable Body going on unceasingly upon thousands of Christian altars and by the hands of thousands of Christian priests. Yet what was intense bitterness to her, to us is exultation, privilege, and love. When she had gently laid aside the crown and nails, as precious relics, with what profound reverence did she kneel to receive the Body of her Son! Yet the Blessed Sacrament is the living Jesus, Soul as well as Body, Godhead as well as Humanity. **Worshipful as was His dead Body, because of its unbroken union with the Person of the Eternal Word, the Blessed Sacrament, if it were possible, demands of us a worship more full of dread, more self-abasing, more profound.** We have no mother's rights. We are not, like Joseph of Arimathea, doing Jesus a service. The obligation is all on our side. With what immense reverence then ought we not to worship this divine Sacrament! Our preparation for Communion should be full of the grand spirit of adoration. In our thanksgiving we ought to be lost in the grandeurs of His condescension, and not too soon begin to ask for graces until we have

prostrated ourselves before that living Incarnate God who at that moment has so wonderfully enshrined Himself within us. **We should behave at Mass as, with all our present faith and knowledge, we should have behaved on Calvary.**

To this reverence we must add tranquillity, or rather, out of this reverence will come tranquillity. The spirit of worship is a spirit of quietness. We must not disquiet ourselves in order to deepen our reverence. Neither must we look into our souls to see if we are worshipping. Under the pretence of keeping up our attention, all this is but so much occupation with self, and so much distraction from Jesus. Hence it is that so many Communion bring forth so little fruit. It is from the want of quietness. The best preparation for the Blessed Sacrament consists by no means in endeavouring to stimulate our affections by devout considerations, in order to warm our cold hearts and raise our fervour to a proper pitch. In truth it is not in our power to do so. The best preparation is that which is rather of a negative character and which consists in emptying ourselves of self, so far as may be,—in banishing distractions, in realising our own needs and poverty and nothingness and malice, and so coming to Jesus in the same temper that the humble sufferers came to Him in the Gospel to be healed of their diseases. Whatsoever is empty and unoccupied in our hearts He will fill when He enters there. Hence the more room there is for Him, the more grace will there be for us. The presence of Jesus is itself peace, and works greater things where it finds peace already.

It is out of peace that love will come, such burning yet such humble love as becomes the worship of the Blessed Sacrament. Very often we love less than we should love if we made less effort to love. Our faith tells us such overwhelming things of this divine mystery that it seems shame, almost a sin, that we are not burning with sensible love all the day long. Jesus Himself so near, so accessible, so intimately uniting Himself to us,—Bethlehem, Nazareth, Calvary actually here,—and we so cold, so moderate, so commonplace! Surely we ought to be burnt up as with the fires of the Seraphim. **It is true.** Yet for all that we cannot force ourselves. The love of the Blessed Sacrament is daily and lifelong. Surely it is not likely that such a love should be always, or even most often, sensible. Do we go to Mass on week-days at our own inconvenience? Are we punctual and reverential in our daily visit to the Blessed Sacrament? Do we hear Mass with devout attention? Are our preparations for Communion, and our thanksgivings after it, among those actions which we practically confess to rank as the most important of our lives? Do we give up exercise, pleasure, visiting, study, and the like, to go to Benediction when it is in our power? These are better proofs of an acceptable love of the Blessed Sacrament than the warmest transports. **Perseverance is the real divine heat in our hearts.**

But out of love must come familiarity. Yet the familiarity must have nothing in it of forwardness, of presumption, of carelessness, of indifference, or even of freedom. Spiritual familiarity is at home with God, not in the sense of ease and freedom, but in the sense of understanding its part, of receiving Him with the proper honours, of calmly and mindfully fulfilling all the ceremonial which His presence requires, and so practically of forgetting self, because there is no need to remember it, and of being occupied reverently and lovingly and tranquilly with Him only. This is the true idea of holy familiarity; and when we consider how frequent and how common Mass, Communion, Benediction, and Visit are, we shall see at once how essential an element it is in our devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

Then, last of all, a continual spirit of reparation must preside over all our devotion, a reparation which is the immediate growth of familiarity. To the devout mind Jesus habitually presents Himself as one who has not got His rights. He is injured and wronged with every heightening circumstance of pathetic injustice. The very thought is so pitiable that **it** creates new love, and the spirit of self-sacrifice beats in it like a heart. Self is more at home in love than in any other of the affections. It is a humbling and an unpoetical truth, but nevertheless a truth. Now the position of being wronged invests the object of our love with a kind of sanctity. Affection assumes something of the nature of worship, and then self can live there **no longer** because worship is the only real incompatibility with self. Hence it is that the love of reparation is a pure and unselfish and disinterested love. But this is not all. Jesus not only habitually presents Himself to us as one who is suffering because He is defrauded of His rights, but also as one who is in some mysterious way dependent on our compassion to console Him, and upon our reparation to make good His losses. This adds tenfold more tenderness to our love, and self returns again, but only in the shape of sacrifice, of generosity, of work, of sorrow, of abandonment. The spirit of reparation is the true Mary's lap within our souls, in which the Blessed Sacrament should ever lie, the pure white corporal of our most disinterested love.

Such should be our devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, as taught us by our Mother ministering to the Body of Jesus on the top of Calvary. It should consist of reverence, tranquillity, love, familiarity, and reparation.

But Mary is also our model of behaviour in grief. Grief may either be the solid foundation on which a vast supernatural edifice of sanctity is to be raised, or it may be the very thinnest and most diluted of all human affections. The very highest and at the same time the very lowest things may be predicated of grief. The reason of the difference is to be found in the way in which we bear it. Grief is a difficult thing to manage. There is no time when our correspondence to grace requires to be more active, more vigilant, or more self-denying than in seasons of affliction. **If we once begin to indulge our grief, a great work of God is frustrated.** We have all of us a great temptation to indulge in grief as if it were a luxury. To endure, to hold fast by God, to do our duty, to supernaturalise our adversity, to carry our cross, to aspire heavenwards,—all these things are fatiguing. They give us the sensation of toiling up a steep hill. Whereas to indulge our grief, to give way unreservedly, to complain, especially if we bring in a vein of religion, like a vein of poetry, into our complaining—these things bring with them the relieving sensation of going down hill. Of a truth it is the most earthward process through which a heart can well go. Thus a tender-hearted man ought to be as much on his guard against sorrow as an intemperate man should be against wine. What makes the temptation more dangerous is that the world applauds the indulgence as if it were a moral loveliness, and looks shy at the restraint as if it were hardness and insensibility; and to be suspected of coldness and indifference is almost more than a tender-hearted man can bear. There is no need to do physical violence to ourselves to hinder tears. God does not dislike to see His creatures weeping. All Our Lady's example counsels is moderation. Let us relieve our hearts. It will make us less selfish. But let us not foster, embrace, rekindle, and indulge our grief. For then our sorrow is a selfish and luxurious fiction.

The indulgence of grief prompts us to dispense ourselves from the duties which our hand finds to do. We think that sorrow makes us privileged persons, forgetting that our privileges are only an increase of our responsibilities. The world's work is not to stop for our sorrow. We are but units in a multitude. We must roll round from west to east with our fellows; we must meet life as life meets us. We must take joy and sorrow as they come: they mostly come both together; both are at work at once, both unresting, both unimportant; but both lie upon our road to the only thing which is of importance, and that is God. Self-importance is the canker-worm of Christian sorrow. We must not make too much of ourselves; yet this is what the world's stupid consolations try to do with those who are in grief. Dispensations are always lowering, but there is nothing which they lower so much as suffering and sorrow. We go slowly and tread lightly when sickness is in the house; but sorrow is by no means a sickness of the soul,—it is its health, and strength, and vigour. Sins of omission may be more venial in times of sorrow, but they none the less unjewel our crown and intercept the generosity of God.

Sorrow is a sanctuary so long as self is kept outside. Self is the desecrating principle. When we find people indulging in the sentimentality of their sorrow, we are almost certain to find them inconsiderate towards others. They are the centres round which everything is to move. Everything is to be subordinate to their mourning. Thus they pay no attention to hours. They disturb the arrangements of the household. They diffuse an atmosphere of gloom around them. They accept the service of others ungracefully. If this goes on, so rapid is the process of corruption when self has tainted sorrow, childhood works up again to the surface in middle life or age, and we have ill-temper, peevishness, petulance, quick words, childish repartee, self-deploring foolishness, grandiloquent exaggerations, attitudes and gestures of despair: in short the long-banished ghosts of the nursery come back again in proportion as sorrow is allowed to unman us. A Christian mourner notes the least acts of thoughtfulness and is full of gratitude for them. He feels more than ever that he deserves nothing, and is surprised at the kindness which he receives. He is for ever thinking of the others in the house, and legislating for them, and contriving that the weight of his cross shall be centred upon himself. He smiles through his tears, takes the sorrow carefully out of the tone of his voice, and makes others almost gay while his own heart is broken. **A saint's sorrow is never in the way: it is a cross only to himself.**

We must be careful also not to demand sympathy from others, and, if possible, not even to crave for it ourselves. What is it worth when it comes, when we have demanded it? Surely the preciousness of sympathy is in its being spontaneous. Not that it is wrong to hunger for sympathy when we are in sorrow. We are not speaking so much of

right and wrong as of fittest and best, of what God loves most, of what makes our sorrow heavenliest. The more consolation from creatures the less from God,—this is the invariable rule; God is shy. Human sympathy is a dear bargain, let it cost us ever so little. God waits outside till our company is gone. Perhaps He cannot wait so long, and goes away, sadly.

Where self comes, unreality will also intrude. This unreality is often shown in shrinking from painful sights and sounds which it is necessary or unavoidable for us to see and hear. Much inconvenience is often occasioned to others by this, and the generous discharge of their duties in the house of sorrow rendered far more onerous and disagreeable than it need have been. There is none of this unworthy effeminacy of sorrow about those who are all for God. Such men neither seek nor avoid such shadows of their grief as come across them. They are supernaturally natural; and this is the perfection of mourning. Neither must we fail to exhibit the utmost docility to the arrangements of others. If this righteous unselfishness is hard to bear, it is a legitimate part of the sacrifice which grief brings along with it. Sorrow tends to eccentricity. The strain of endurance makes men curiously fanciful. All this we must restrain, make it part of our immolation, and offer it to God. If our sorrow intrinsically weighs an ounce, a pound of self-sacrifice must go along with it. **We must bear harder upon ourselves than God bears upon us: this is royal-heartedness.** The whole theology of sorrow may be compressed into a kind of syllogism: everything is given for sanctification, and sorrow above all other things; but selfish sorrow is sorrow un sanctified; therefore unselfishness is grace's product out of sorrow.

To all these counsels we must add yet another. There must be in our grief a total absence of realising the unkindness or neglect of *human* agents. Nobody is in fault but God; and God cannot be in fault; therefore there is no fault at all,—there is only the divine will. Faith must see nothing else; it must ignore secondary causes. Faith takes its crosses only from Jesus and straight from Him.

All these are hard lessons. Yet we could hardly expect Mary's lessons to be easy ones, least of all when she gives them from the top of Calvary.

THE SEVENTH DOLOUR

Jesus Buried in His Tomb

In this Seventh Dolour we consider how Our Lady, after the burial of her Jesus, returned desolate to Jerusalem, there to await in patience His certain Resurrection.

The seventh Dolour contains many lessons. We learn from the promptitude with which our Blessed Mother left the tomb to do her work and to fulfil in her cheerless desolation the will of God, **how we ourselves should put duty before all considerations and, in comparison with It, estimate as nothing the highest spiritual consolations.** Now, as if providence arranged it so on purpose, duty seems often to lead from the sensible enjoyment of Jesus. Even in common domestic life the unselfishness of daily charity will lead us to sacrifice what looks like a religious advantage for an agreeableness which others do not particularly value, and which appears to be only a growth of acquired politeness or of natural kindliness, and not at all an obedience to a supernatural bidding of grace. It is hard at all times to persuade ourselves that **there is no spiritual advantage to be compared to the giving up of our own will,** and that petty mortifications, which concern our own private ways, and the use of our time, and habits even of devotion, are, so long as they are painful to us, amongst the highest methods of sanctification. It is necessary to add "*so long as they are painful to us*", for, unlike other mortifications, when they cease to be painful, they cease to be mortifications, and become symptoms of the world having got the better of us.

Unfortunately spirituality tends to be selfish, Our nature so bad that good things acquire evil propensities from their union with us. Thus even the love of our Blessed Lord, when discretion does not guide it, may interfere with our love of others, and so come at last to be an untrue love of Him. Untrue, because merely sentimental; for there is no divine love which is not at the same time self-denying. To have to give up our own ways to those of others, to have our times of prayer at hours which we dislike, to accommodate our habits of piety to the habits of others, is certainly a delicate and perilous process, one needing great discretion, safe discretion, and an abiding fear of worldliness. Nevertheless it

is often a most needful means of sanctification. The use of time, whether we consider the annoying weariness of punctuality and the supernatural captivity of regular hours, and whether we look at the unwelcome interruptions and somewhat excessive demands upon it made by the inconsiderateness and importunity of others, is a most copious source of vigorous and bracing mortification for those who are trying to love God purely amid the inevitable follies and multifarious distractions of the world. But if manners and charity may lawfully draw us from the sensible enjoyment of Jesus, it would be simply unlawful to deny the claims of duty to compel such an act of self-denial. Yet it is a point in which pious people, especially beginners, almost invariably fail. Beginners cannot easily persuade themselves that Jesus can be more really anywhere than in the sensible enjoyments of Him. The more advanced souls know well that Jesus unfelt is a greater grace than Jesus felt, in a multitude of instances; yet even with them practice falls below knowledge, because nature rebels to the very last against whatever limits the prerogatives of sense.

If Mary sought for no consolation in the house of John but abandoned herself, there to her desolation till Easter morning, does it not seem as if there was some kind of justification for those who cherish their grief and brood over it? We must distinguish. Grief in divine things so far differs from grief arising from earthly losses and bereavements, that we have no right to put it away from ourselves or to seek consolation, until the impulses of grace bid us do so. Thus sorrow for sin, sadness because of the sins of others, grief because of the vicissitudes of the Church, grief because of Our Lord's Passion or sorrowing sympathy with Our Lady's Dolours, are not so much events of human sadness which befall us, as direct operations of grace, and therefore aiming at different ends and working by other laws. Such griefs should be cherished, their remembrances kindled, and their shadows be perhaps with some slight degree of violence retained. All this is unlawful with ordinary sorrows. Yet even in the case of divine sorrows it is to be remembered that any grace which is out of the jurisdiction of discretion, is a phenomenon utterly unknown to the highest theology of the saints.

We learn from this last sorrow that there **is no darkness like the darkness of a world without Jesus**, such as Mary's world was on that fearful night. It is darker than the darkness of Calvary; for that is a darkness which cheers, refreshes, and inspires,—Jesus is there. But the darkness of the absence of Jesus is as it were a participation in the most grievous pain of hell. If it is by our own fault, then it is the greatest of sorrows.' If it is a trial from God, then it is the greatest of sufferings. In either case we must not let the light of the world tempt us out of the darkness. In such a gloom it is indeed dreadful to abide; but the consequences of leaving it by our self-will are more dreadful still. It is not safe there to think of creatures. We must think of God only. It is the sanctuary of "God Alone." We must leave Him who brought us there, whether for chastisement or fervour, to take us out when it shall be His will.

One more lesson still Mary teaches. She did her work in the world, as it were with all her heart, and yet her heart was not there, but in the tomb with Jesus. This is the grand work which sorrow does for all of us: **it entombs us in the will of God**; it buries our love, together with our sorrow, in the Blessed Sacrament. Sorrow is as it were the missionary of the Divine will. It is the prince of the apostles. The Church is built upon it. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Our Lord is with it always to the end. It is sorrow that digs the grave of self, and buries self therein, and fills it up. The great secret of holiness is never to have our hearts in our own breasts, but living and beating in the Heart of Jesus; and this can rarely be accomplished except through the operation of sanctified sorrow. Happy therefore is he who has sorrow at all hours to sanctify!

APPENDIX (*Added by the editor.*)

I. **Indulged Aspirations.**

The following indulged aspirations may be piously recited in connection with the reading of the present booklet. Each aspiration may be recited over and over again. Let us remember that St. Francis de Sales regarded one aspiration recited a hundred times as more fruitful than a hundred different aspirations, each recited once. We might then give to each aspiration (or to any particularly chosen one) - a decade of our beads, or even a whole round. But let us beg God for the grace of saying the aspirations attentively and from our hearts. Mere quantity of prayer could not greatly please Him with-out good quality also. As for the Indulgences, we shall do well to place them in the hands of Our Lady, to be applied as she sees fit, whether to our own souls or to the suffering souls in Purgatory.

- (i.) Teach me, O Lord, to do Thy Will, for Thou art my God.
- (ii.) Hail, O Cross, our only hope!
- (iii.) O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.
- (iv.) Lord, I thank Thee for having died on the Cross for my sins.
- (v.) Mary of Sorrows, Mother of Christians, pray for us.
- (vi.) Mother of love, of sorrow, and of mercy, pray for us.
- (vii) Holy Mother, pierce me through; in my heart each wound renew of my Saviour Crucified.
- (viii.) O my God, I thank Thee for what Thou givest and for what Thou takest away. Thy Will be done.
- (ix.) Jesus, my God, I love Thee above all things.
- (x.) My own dear Jesus, teach me patience when throughout the day my heart is put to the test by bothersome little crosses.
- (xi.) Divine Heart of Jesus, convert sinners, save the dying, free the holy souls in Purgatory.
- (xii.) From a sudden and unprovided death, O Lord, deliver us.
- (xiii.) O my Jesus, grant a happy death to all those who are in their agony throughout the world.
- (xiv.) Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give You my heart and my soul.
- (xv.) Sacred Heart of Jesus, I believe in Thy love for me.
- (xvi.) Sacred Heart of Jesus, grant that I may love Thee and make Thee loved.
- (xvii.) Mary, Mother of grace, Mother of mercy, shield us from the enemy and receive us in the hour of our death.
- (xviii.) Thy Will be done. (*The Indulgence is for those who in their troubles' devoutly recite this aspiration with confidence in God.*)
- (xix.) I deserve to suffer this for my sins, O Lord. (*The Indulgence is for making this act of humility in one's spiritual or temporal troubles.*)
- (xx.) May the grace of the Holy Ghost enlighten our thoughts and our hearts.
- (xxi) Hail, true Body, born of the Virgin Mary!
- (xxii) Glory, love, and thanksgiving to the Sacred Heart of Jesus!
- (xxiii) Lord, teach us how to pray.
- (xxiv) O Lord, increase our faith.
- (xxv) Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.
- (xxvi) My Jesus, mercy!
- (xxvii) Blessed be Jesus Christ and His Most Pure Mother!
- (xxviii.) O Jesus, with all my heart I cling to Thee.
- (xxix) I adore Thee in every moment, O Living Bread from Heaven, Great Sacrament.
- (xxx.) Grant, O Blessed Joseph, that we pass through our lives free from sin, ever secure under thy fatherly care.

II. The Dolours Rosary and the Black Scapular

We should do well to get ourselves each a Dolours Rosary, to have **it** blessed *with the proper formula* by a priest having the necessary faculties, and to recite it regularly. Each “decade” consists of a Pater and seven Ayes; we may conclude the “decade” with the invocation “*Virgin Most Sorrowful, pray for us.*” The three Aves at the end of the Rosary are to be recited in honour of Our Lady’s tears.

We should do well also to get ourselves enrolled in the Black Scapular. This makes us members of the Arch-Confraternity in honour of Our Lady’s Dolours. The Black Scapular is one of “the Five,” and opportunities for enrolment occur frequently, at missions and retreats.

III. Biographical Note

Frederick William Faber was born in Yorkshire on June 28th, 1814. He spent eight years as a clergyman in the Church of England before becoming a Catholic on November 17th, 1845. He was ordained a Catholic priest on Holy Saturday, 1847. He joined before long the Oratorian Fathers of St. Philip Neri, and spent the rest of his life in that Congregation. He died in the London Oratory on September 26th, 1863. He had great largeness of mind; his heart was

most loving. His works include: *All for Jesus*; *Bethlehem*; *Growth in Holiness*; *Spiritual Conferences*; *The Foot of the Cross*. He also wrote some well-known hymns, among them *Faith of our Fathers*: