

MEDITATIONS ON THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

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1st Day—The Precious Blood—Its Name

I. Why is the Blood of Jesus called the *Precious Blood*? Because it was the Blood of God Himself, veiled under the form of man; and therefore every drop of it as it flowed through His sacred veins deserved our supreme homage, as being united to His Divinity. Hence we can adore the Precious Blood as we adore the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and all else that belongs to the Sacred Humanity, with that supreme homage that belongs to God alone.

2. We also term it the Precious Blood, inasmuch as it was the Blood of One Who was not only full of grace, but was Himself the source of all grace, so that the grace that dwelt with Him was infinite, and the grace that manifested itself through the veil of flesh had no bounds or limits, save those that the mere fact of His Human Nature carried with it. If, therefore, the blood of the Saints is counted as most precious, if we treasure up a piece of cloth stained with their blood, how much more is the Blood of the King of Saints precious beyond all price?

3. The Precious Blood is also precious on account of its effects. One drop of it was sufficient not only to cleanse the world from sin, but to earn all possible graces for all the millions who have ever lived on earth. How infinite then must be its preciousness! What has it not done for man? What has it not done for me? It has washed me clean and made me pure, in spite of all my sins. O Jesus, give me an ever-increasing devotion to the Precious Blood!

2nd Day—The Eternity of the Precious Blood

1. St Peter tells us (1 Peter i. 20) that the Precious Blood of Christ was “foreknown before the foundations of the world.” From all eternity God had decreed that the Precious Blood of the Word made Man should be shed for us. Even before man had sinned God had provided a remedy, and had determined that if man should rebel against the sovereignty of God, He would not cast the rebel off, but would redeem him from sin even at such a price as this. How can we sufficiently admire the love and mercy of God, thus counteracting the effect of sin even before it was committed!

2. God’s foreknowledge of what was to happen did not affect the perfect freedom of the human will, any more than the presence of a spectator affects the freedom of those whose actions he watches. God determined that the Precious Blood should be shed because He foreknew that men would sin, and He foreknew that men would sin because in His omniscience He foresaw that men acting freely would use their free-will to disobey. Make an act of faith in man’s freedom and God’s foreknowledge.

3. When God looks forward to my life what does He foresee? This depends on myself and on my voluntary choice of good or of evil. What return does He look forward to from me for the inestimable gift of the Precious Blood? Am I going to grieve and wound Him Who from all eternity decreed that His Precious Blood should be shed to win for me the Kingdom of Heaven?

3rd Day—The Anticipation of the Precious Blood

1. When the promise of the Redeemer to come was made to our first parents in the Garden of Eden after their fall, the shadow of the Precious Blood fell upon the world and reconciled it with God. The curse that had been incurred had lost its fatal power to destroy. The anger of God was appeased: He looked upon the earth through the medium of the Blood of His only-begotten Son, that was to be shed for sin, and for its sake offered forgiveness and mercy to the sinners who repented of their sin. So may He extend to me the forgiveness and mercy that I need far more than did Adam and Eve, for I have sinned far more deeply and more often than they.

2. As the ages rolled on, the same shadow, sheltering men from God’s fierce anger, still rested on the earth. In its sweet shade rested Abraham and all the Patriarchs, Samuel and all the Prophets; through its influence sinners found mercy and saints obtained graces innumerable. If it did so much for the heathen world, what must it not do for Christians and Catholics? Grant, O Lord, that now and ever may sit under His shadow whom I have desired!

3. All through the thousands of years before Christ came, the tradition of the necessity of the shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sins was almost universal. The Jewish sacrifices were expressly ordained to keep up the memory of it. In heathen countries the blood of victims was almost everywhere offered. God never leaves Himself without a witness even among those who have departed far from Him. Admire His goodness in so doing.

4th Day—Types of the Precious Blood

(1) The Blood of Abel

1. Abel was slain by his cruel brother Cain because God accepted his sacrifice but did not accept that of Cain. Cain, filled with rage at the acceptance of Abel's sacrifice, deliberately shed his innocent blood. So the Jews, filled with rage at the exceeding holiness of Jesus' life, at the sweet attractiveness of His words, and the Divine beauty of His works of mercy, shed His Precious Blood. So the wicked are ever enraged against the good, and grudge them their favour with God.

2. The blood of Abel cried out to God for vengeance on his murderer. The Blood of Jesus, which speaketh better things than that of Abel, cries out to God for mercy on those who have outraged Him and put Him to death. Even while He hung on the Cross He prayed His Father to forgive them, and ever since, as long as the world shall last, His Blood still cries, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" O Jesus, may Thy Blood thus cry out for me!

3. Yet, at the same time, it cries for vengeance on those who deliberately and wilfully reject Him. Long, indeed, He bears with them, long and patiently. Yet if in the end they spurn His Precious Blood, His very mercy will bring upon them a vengeance in proportion to His offer of love. O Jesus! may I never reject Thee or refuse Thy love and mercy!

5th Day—Types of the Precious Blood:

(2) The Blood of the Paschal Lamb

1. On the night when God delivered His people from Egypt a lamb was slain that was a type of the Lamb of God. It was to be a lamb without blemish, no bone of it was to be broken; it was to be wholly consumed by those in whose dwelling it was slain, and its blood was to be shed to the last drop. Apply these conditions of the Paschal Lamb to the Lamb of God, and see how perfectly they were fulfilled in the Sacrifice of the Cross.

2. The blood of the Paschal Lamb was to be sprinkled on the doorposts of the Israelites; and thereby they were to be rendered safe from the judgment that fell upon the Egyptians. So the Precious Blood sprinkled upon our hearts saves us from the punishment we have justly deserved. It appeases the anger of God and marks us as belonging to Him, and as travellers to the Heavenly Jerusalem longing to be freed from the bondage of earthly things.

3. How is the Precious Blood sprinkled on our souls? In all the sacraments of the Church, in every act of contrition, in every deed of supernatural charity, in every prayer offered humbly and with confidence, it falls upon us, renders us safe from the avenging Angel, and secures us from the anger of God that our sins have justly merited. *Asperges me, Domine, hyssopo et mundabor—* "Sprinkle me, O Lord, and I shall be rendered clean in Thy sight."

6th Day—Types of the Precious Blood

(3) The Peace-Offering

1. The Peace-Offering was one of the chief sacrifices of the Old Law. It was an offering of gratitude for blessings received or of petition for blessings desired. So Jesus offered Himself upon the Cross, not only to obtain for us the blessings of eternal life, but also to render thanks to God for His mercy to man and make to Him the only possible return worthy of His Divine Majesty.

2. The blood of the heifer sacrificed was shed as a necessary part of the sacrifice. "The sons of Aaron, the priests, shall pour the blood round about the altar" (Lev. i. II). There is no mark of our gratitude to God like willingness to suffer for Him. The blood is, as it were, the life, and the shedding of it corresponds in the body to the sacrifice of our will in the soul, which is the noblest sacrifice that man can make to God. Do I sacrifice my will to God's, or is self-will still strong within me?

3. The blood was shed, moreover, as a means of obtaining fresh favours. Those who are anxious to gain great things from God, must make some sacrifice for His sake, and those, who are most powerful with Him are those who give up their will to His. Christ in His Sacred Humanity is all-powerful with God, because in the head of the book it is written of Him, that He should fulfil the will of God and He was content to do it. Do I deserve such influence with Him?

7th Day—Types of the Precious Blood:

(4) The Offerings for Sins of Ignorance

1. In the Book of Leviticus (ch. iv.) an elaborate ritual is prescribed in expiation of sins committed through ignorance. A calf is to be offered and the ancients of the people are to lay their hands upon its head, and the priest is to carry some of its blood into the tabernacle of the testimony, and to sprinkle it seven times before the veil and to pour forth the blood at the foot of the altar. All this is in expiation for sins committed by those who at the time knew not that they were sins! What a proof of God's hatred of sin, even though he who did the act was not at the time aware that it was a sin

2. Yet such ignorance is rarely altogether without some fault. Sometimes there is at least some faint suspicion that the deed done is displeasing to God, sometimes the ignorance is itself the result of sin blinding the soul and dulling the perceptions, sometimes it is the consequence of obstinacy and self-will. I may have committed many sins through ignorance; were they altogether without fault?

3. Those sins had to be atoned for with blood, and that blood was a type of the Blood of Jesus. He, therefore, shed His Precious Blood for my sins of ignorance as well as sins of malice, and whatever fault was in them added to His sacred sufferings. I must then compassionate Him for all that He suffered for the countless sins that men have committed against God through ignorance, and especially for my own.

8th Day—Types of the Precious Blood

(5) The Holocaust

1. The Holocaust, or whole burnt-offering, might be an ox or sheep or pigeon or turtle-dove, according to the abilities of him who offered it. Its blood was to be shed, and the whole body was afterwards to be burnt upon the altar. So Christ offered Himself a holocaust to God; there was no part of His human nature that was not sacrificed for the sins of men. All the faculties of His Soul, every thought and wish and inclination, every nerve and fibre in His Body, all were offered to God and consecrated to Him. Try and realize the extent of this sacrifice.

2. In this offering Christ left us an example. If we are really to tread in His footsteps a partial offering is not enough. As long as we keep anything for ourselves and deny it to God, there is rapine in our holocaust—that is, we keep back part of what we profess to sacrifice entirely to God, and such an offering cannot be acceptable. Is there anything which I consciously still keep back from God?

3. First of all the blood of the holocaust was to be shed, and the blood, as we read in Holy Scripture, signifies the life. We must therefore dedicate our lives to God before we can belong wholly to Him. Hence the virtue of religious vows. If we are not called to these, at least we are called to make the service of God the end and aim of our daily life. Is this the character of my life?

9th Day—The Precious Blood in Its Earthly Origin

1. The Precious Blood of Jesus flowing through His veins while an infant in His Holy Mother's womb was derived from Mary. He lived with her life. She furnished from her immaculate body the Precious Blood that Jesus shed for us. How close must have been the union of Jesus and Mary! Can we wonder at her surpassing holiness, when she not only carried her God within her womb, but furnished the very Body with which His Humanity clothed itself

2. We also find in this thought a fresh proof of Mary's unblemished purity. It is repugnant to our reverence for the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity to imagine Him dwelling in a womb that had ever been defiled with sin, and much more to suppose that the Precious Blood which flowed in His veins and was the price of our redemption did not come from a source as pure as God could make it. Make an act of faith in the Immaculate Conception of Mary, and

thank God for that privilege conferred on her.

3. We must also remember that Jesus' Blood was wholly Mary's. It was not as in the case of other children who have an earthly father. The Body of Jesus was formed in Mary's womb by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and naturally Jesus was altogether hers. In Heaven, the Body that Jesus wears is still the Body derived from Mary, and their union is now closer than ever. In Holy Communion Jesus is altogether ours. Do we conform ourselves to Him as Mary did?

10th Day—The Precious Blood on Calvary

1. In old pictures and engravings of the Crucifixion we often see Angels holding a chalice to catch the drops of the Precious Blood as they fell from the sacred wounds in the hands and feet of Jesus. It is also said that the angels collected all the Blood that our Lord had shed during his passion that not a drop might be lost. How they must have counted each drop as a treasure of infinite value! What were all the treasures of earth compared with these drops, instinct with the Godhead of Jesus? Pray that you may scorn all earthly things in comparison with the Precious Blood of Jesus.

2. The Angels not only treasure up the Precious Blood, but they pay to each drop their supreme homage. So we kneel and adore the Precious Blood in the chalice upon the altar. In each drop Christ is present whole and undivided. Make an act of faith in this wondrous miracle, and pray that you may adore with a reverent homage like that of the Angels present at the Crucifixion.

3. As the three hours advance, the Body of Jesus is more and more drained of the Precious Blood. Hence follows a thirst so agonizing that it forced from the lips of Jesus the cry, "I thirst". When our lips are parched and dry in sickness or in the agony of death, may we remember Thee, O Lord, and Thy Sacred Thirst endured for us, and may we offer up our sufferings in union with Thy unspeakable and agonizing thirst upon the Cross!

11th Day—The Universality of the Precious Blood

1. It is of faith that Christ died, not only for the elect, but for all. There was no single individual member of the whole race of men who did not enjoy the privilege of being redeemed by Christ, not the most degraded of the heathen, not the most ignorant or the most hardened in sin. The Precious Blood was sprinkled on all, and if they did not avail themselves of its benefits it was their own fault. None will incur the eternal misery of Hell who has not deliberately rejected the forgiveness that the Precious Blood won for us.

2. What about the innocent child who dies without Baptism? For it, too, the Precious Blood was shed; and if it does not attain to eternal happiness in Heaven, this is owing to the wilful sin of man, and not to any lack of efficacy in the Blood of Jesus. Such a child will at least enjoy great natural happiness to all eternity. He Who shed His Precious Blood for all is not unmindful of those who, through no fault of their own, fail of attaining the joy of the Beatific Vision.

3. Does the Precious Blood do anything for sinners who have rejected it? Yes, for though their rejection of it excludes them from all right to share in the blessings it won for man, and has deserved for them eternal punishment, yet their punishment, terrible as it will be, will nevertheless be in some way short of what they deserved, and this through the merits of the Precious Blood. Thank God for His infinite mercy, and pray that you may never forfeit any of the graces won for you.

12th Day—The Victories of the Precious Blood

1. The Precious Blood has conquered sin and Satan. It was the shedding of it on the Cross which gave the death-blow to the kingdom of the devil. It was when the Son of God had by the loss of His Sacred Blood been reduced to the extremity of weakness and of misery, and brought down to the very gates of death, that He triumphed over the tyrant that had enslaved the world, and compelled all the rebel angels to bow the knee before His Sacred Humanity. Rejoice with your victorious King, and pray that you may deserve to share His triumph.

2. The Precious Blood has also conquered sinners by thousands, who, if it had not been shed, would have remained hardened sinners unto the end. Who can withstand its silent appeal, as it trickles down from His Head, His

Hands, His Feet? Who can refuse to listen to its silent pleadings? Who can turn away from Him Who has thus loved us even unto death? O my Jesus, may I never turn away from Thy voice calling me from Thy Throne upon the Cross to love Thee and obey Thy voice.

3. The Precious Blood has also conquered and averted the anger of God, Whose decree of just retribution would but for it have fallen upon sinners. Can the Father resist the pleadings of His coequal Son, when He holds out His Hands, still marked with the scars of His sacred wounds, and asks for mercy and forgiveness for the sinner? May Thy wounds, O Jesus, plead for me now and at the hour of death!

13th Day—The Conquests of the Precious Blood

1. Victory without conquest is but of little avail to one who invades the territory of the foe. Our Lord came not only to subdue His enemies, but to obtain for Himself a kingdom. By the shedding of the Precious Blood the kingdoms of this world became the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever. The Blood of Jesus sinking into the ground gave to this earth a new life. The curse had departed, the new era had begun, which shall culminate in the new Heaven and the new earth wherein dwelleth justice. Pray that the King may soon come to take possession of this kingdom.

2. The shedding of the Precious Blood also won for Christ our King not only a new territory, but a multitude of new subjects. If the material world was sanctified by the Precious Blood, how much more those who dwelt upon it! What must be the joy of Jesus to look down on countries still faithful to Him amidst trials and persecutions. Ireland, Belgium, Spain, Catholic Austria, many parts of France and Italy, covered with multitudes subdued and held in joyful captivity by the Precious Blood. Rejoice in the wide spread of the Faith, and pray that it may spread more and more.

3. Above all, the Precious Blood has subdued to the yoke of Christ priests innumerable, monks, nuns, saints in the world and in religion, all rejoicing to be the very bond-slaves of the Precious Blood. Their chief calls himself the Servant of the Servants of God. Pray that you may rejoice to be a willing slave of Jesus Christ.

14th Day—Sanctification by the Precious Blood

1. The Precious Blood does more than wash away the sins of men and restore them to friendship with God. This is but the commencement of its work of love and mercy. It has in it unlimited power to carry them on to the heights of sanctity, to engender in them every virtue, to implant in the soul all the gifts of the Holy Ghost. So we read in the Apocalypse that the Lamb of God has not only washed us from our sins in His own Blood, but also made us to be kings and priests to God. So through the Precious Blood there is bestowed on me not only cleanness from my past sins, but graces to make me beautiful in the sight of God.

2. How does the Precious Blood win these graces for us? It appeals to the love of God, and reminds Him that as He has given us the surpassing gift of His own Son to be sacrificed for us, He must with Him also freely give us *all things*. In that one gift all else is contained, and we have a sort of claim to whatever we want from the hands of God.

3. The Precious Blood of Christ also obtains our sanctification by the merits that it won for us. Each drop that was shed was enough, and more than enough, to purchase graces without limit or end. All the actions of our Lord had an infinite value by reason of His infinite dignity. How much more the shedding of that Blood which in itself calls for the highest adoration, inasmuch as it was the Blood of God Himself, and had communicated to it the glory of His Divinity by reason of the Hypostatic Union.

15th Day— The Waste of the Precious Blood

1. It seems a strange thing to say that the Precious Blood of Jesus was wasted, and in one sense it is true that every drop fulfilled the design for which it was shed in the honour it gave to God and the immeasurable reward that it won for the Sacred Humanity Of the Son of God. But as regards men for whom it was shed, it was in great measure wasted, because they in their folly and guilt refused the boon that was offered them. Alas what madness to spurn such a treasure, every drop of which was worth a million worlds.

2. How do men waste the Precious Blood? Whenever they reject any grace that it has won for them, whether it be a grace to avoid sin, or a grace that is intended to carry them on to a higher level of virtue, their rejection renders it,

as far as they are concerned, inefficacious. It has been offered in vain, on account of their non-acceptance of the grace offered them.

3. Their rejection of it does not simply leave them where they were, but puts them in a worse position than before it was received. They are less ready to receive further graces. They have disqualified themselves for at least a portion of the rich store of grace that God had prepared for them. The Precious Blood has not only been shed in Him for them, but through their perversity has been for their disadvantage, and not for their benefit. Pray, then, that you may never wilfully reject any grace, lest your birthright, like Esau's, should prove a curse rather than a blessing.

16th Day—The Trampling on the Precious Blood

1. There are some who not only waste the Precious Blood, but actually trample it under their *feet*. These are they who, being washed from all their sins in the most Precious Blood of Jesus, deliberately turn back again to the sins they have abandoned, set at nought His proffered love and friendship, and become far worse at the end than they were at the beginning. My Jesus, may I never be guilty of such base ingratitude

2. But there are others still worse, who, after having been enrolled in the army of Jesus Christ, desert His standard and profess themselves unable to accept the teaching of the Church. Through pride or vice or covetousness they lose all their love of their holy faith and appreciation of its truth. These do indeed trample on the Precious Blood, and put Christ our Lord to shame. Yet at any time, without God's grace, I might be guilty of a like abandonment of my faith. O my God I make me always faithful to Thee

3. There is a still lower depth. Some not only lose their faith, but become its enemies and traducers. They esteem the Blood with which they are sanctified an unclean thing, and offer an affront to the Spirit of grace. They assail the Church, its ministers, its sacraments, its doctrines, with lying lips and open insult. How can any ever fall so low as this! Yet among them will be found some who were once more pleasing to God than I. May I take warning from them and humble myself, and cherish as an inestimable treasure the grace won for me by the Precious Blood!

17th Day—The Precious Blood quenching the flames of Hell

1. Mortal sin can only have two endings: to be blotted out by the Precious Blood, or incur the eternal punishment of Hell. By the first it is totally extinguished; in the second it is retained as a testimony to the justice of God and to His infinite holiness, which cannot endure to look upon iniquity. Pray for a great horror of mortal sin which involves such consequences; everlasting misery for the unrepentant sinner, and the pouring forth of the Precious Blood as the only, remedy even for those who do penance for their sins.

2. The guilt of mortal sin is entirely abolished by the Blood of Christ and also its eternal punishment: but the temporal punishment only so far as the sinner has a sufficient contrition for his sin and does all in his power to atone for it. For many who die in the love and fear of God there will remain a heavy debt still to be paid.

3. How are we to apply to our souls the Blood of Christ so that we may be free from temporal punishment as well as from guilt? (1) We must offer up our sufferings in union with those of the Son of God, and bear them with meekness and resignation for His sake. (2) We must make frequent acts of the love of God and seek to bear Him in continual remembrance. (3) We must perform some determinate penances for determinate sins, both for sins in the past, and tendencies to sin in the present. (4) We must give alms if we can. (5) We must try and extinguish our own sins by saving others from sin. To prevent one mortal sin is to extinguish a virtual hell.

18th Day—The Precious Blood a Lesson of Sacrifice

1. Why did the Eternal Father choose for His coequal Son that He should close His sojourn on earth by the cruel agony and unspeakable degradation of shedding for man the last drop of the Precious Blood? Would it not have sufficed to redeem us from sin if He had appeared on earth for one instant clad in human form? Yes, but then man would never have learnt the lesson of sacrifice. He would not have been moved to regard suffering as a necessary part of the ideal life. We thank Thee, O Lord, for this Thy commiseration for our blindness and our ignorance!

2. The lesson of sacrifice for the sake of others is one that our Lord's life teaches us throughout. Nothing for Himself; no concession to His human nature for its own sake. No avoiding of pain or reproach on account of the

suffering it entailed, but rather a joyful acceptance of all that might be to man a source of grace and a motive of virtue. May I rejoice, O Lord, to have the privilege of following Thee step by step along Thy path of suffering!

3. This road of suffering is also one that leads us to solid happiness in this world and eternal joy in the next. It is for our own interest to sacrifice ourselves. Who are so happy as they who shed their blood for Christ? For them no Purgatory whatever through their past life, but an immediate entrance into the celestial Paradise. Such a sacrifice as this may not be asked of me, but do I make those that I know would be pleasing to Him Who sacrificed Himself wholly for me?

19th Day—The Precious Blood a Lesson of Patience

1. If we watch the Son of God during those scenes in His Sacred Passion in which He shed His Blood for us, we notice in one and all His exceeding and incomparable patience. During the Agony in the Garden it was the sight of the brutal ingratitude of man that caused the sweat of blood to flow from His sacred limbs. How could He endure to suffer for such wretches? Yet meekly and patiently He endured their sacrileges, blasphemies, impurities, wanton hatred of God, which rose up before Him as He knelt there in Gethsemane.

2. At the Pillar again, what Divine patience! Not a look of anger, not a word of reproach. There He stands, the picture of uncomplaining endurance. What a lesson for me! How ready I am to complain, even when I receive some fancied slight or some trifling injury. How different am I from the Son of God! What a contrast is my conduct to His. O Jesus! teach me to endure without complaint my sufferings which are small indeed when compared with Thine!

3. See Him once more upon the Cross! Listen to the gibes and sneers cast at Him by the priests, their taunts of His inability to save Himself, Messiah though He was. How all this must have aggravated His physical agony! Yet His constant prayer was, “Father, forgive them!” O Jesus, grant me more of the patience and meekness Thou didst show while Thy Precious Blood was ebbing forth on the altar of the Cross!

20th Day—The Precious Blood a Lesson of Charity

1. “He loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own Blood” (Apoc. i. 5). St John, the Apostle of Love, mentions this as the primary mark of the love of Jesus for us. He proved His love by saving those He loved from that which would have separated them for ever from Him, and this although the loss was theirs, not His, and though it was one that they richly deserved to incur. Here is a model for us, when others wrong us and return ill-will for our love.

2. This reconciliation He effected at the cost of His own Blood. We read sometimes of a child who sheds his blood for father or mother, or a husband who sheds his blood for his beloved spouse. We admire exceedingly such noble and generous self-devotion. But who ever heard of one who shed his blood *in* order to reconcile to himself and restore peace and happiness to enemies who had wilfully and deliberately insulted him? Love so wonderful as this was possible only to the Son of God.

3. Yet if we are really to learn of Him to follow in His footsteps, we must imitate Him in this love for enemies. He Himself commands it “Love your enemies.” “If you love them that love you, what reward shall you have?” The precept seems impossible, and becomes possible only when we contemplate Him Who shed the last drop of His Blood for those who hated Him. Looking at Thee, O Lord, I not only will forgive those who have offended me, but I will seek to do them good, that I may have the happiness of doing to them as Thou hast done to me!

21st Day—The First Shedding of the Precious Blood

1. It was but a few days after our Lord’s Birth that His Precious Blood first flowed for the sins of men. It was on the occasion of His circumcision, the rite which is generally believed to have been the condition of the cleansing away of original sin under the Jewish covenant. O Jesus, at least Thine infancy might have passed before the work of expiation began! No; from His earliest days Christ began His work of redemption. In His yearning love He longed for suffering on behalf of those He loved, and would brook no delay.

2. The Precious Blood flowing in those earliest days teaches us another lesson. It shows how sin never fails to bring suffering with it. If it did so in the case of God made Man, and that throughout His life so that He was never exempt from suffering, how much more is it reasonable that it should do so in the case of sinful man. If it did such

things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? How then can I with all my sins expect to escape suffering?

3. Yet this first blood-shedding, this early suffering, was the occasion of the Name of Jesus being given to the Child Who endured it. He was our Saviour in, and because of, His suffering in, and because of, the shedding of His Precious Blood. Hence to suffer for Him, to be willing to shed our blood for Him, is the condition of sharing in His glorious work as Saviour of the world. Without suffering, without shedding of blood, is no remission.

22nd Day—The Second Shedding of the Precious Blood

1. It is said that those who have suffered an extremity of anguish have sometimes been bathed in a perspiration which was tinged with blood. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was bathed in a sweat of blood which poured down to the ground. Ah! what must have been the intensity of His agony. None ever knew such sorrow as His. None ever was so crushed by the weight of intolerable misery. How could this happen to the Divine Son of God? To me it might have happened, and happened justly for my sins, but to Him it seems impossible, unjust, cruel.

2. It happened to Jesus because on Him sin was allowed to wreak all its malice, to do all the havoc of which its immeasurable intensity of evil is possible, as far as was compatible with His sinlessness and His Divine perfections. In some respects the very perfection of His nature caused Him to suffer more, as none was so sensitive to pain and disappointment as He; and His Divinity, far from being used by Him to relieve His sufferings, was only employed to enable His Sacred Humanity to suffer more than it could have borne unaided.

3. Was this unjust? No, for He took it upon Himself and bore it willingly. Was it cruel? No, for His Sacred Humanity was to have a reward altogether exceeding such sufferings as His. It was to enjoy the glory of the highest Heaven to all eternity in return for its brief agony on earth. For the joy that was set before Him He gladly endured it all, the joy of saving us from sin and death.

23rd Day—The Third Shedding of the Precious Blood

1. When Pilate found that he could not persuade the Jews to consent to the release of Jesus, he ordered Him to be scourged, hoping that they might be satisfied with something short of His Death, and that their rage might be softened at the sight of a punishment so cruel. The scourging was for this reason severe beyond what was usual, as the Pharisees are said to have bribed the executioners and plied them with drink to induce them to still greater barbarity. See how all seemed to unite to add to the tortures inflicted on the Son of God.

2. Watch the scene. The Son of God with His hands tied to a short pillar: on either side of Him an executioner with a scourge of many lashes, some tipped with barbed spikes of iron, lashing Him with brutal ferocity. His Sacred Body first covered with bruises and weals, and then the flesh cut open and the Precious Blood first trickling and then flowing down from the open wounds. Still they go on striking; the wounds and sores and bleeding flesh with unrelenting violence, the barbs tearing off morsels of flesh until the ground is covered not only with a pool of blood, but also with morsels of His Sacred Flesh. O Jesus! what didst Thou not suffer for me!

3. Hear Him moaning gently in His agony, and amidst the moans praying to the Eternal Father to accept each blow in expiation for the sins of men, and especially for the sinful indulgence of the flesh. O Jesus, may the thought of Thy scourging keep me from ever yielding to temptation, and may I mortify my body for love of Thee.

24th Day—The Fourth Shedding of the Precious Blood

1. After the scourging, the soldiers devised a fresh torture for the Son of God. They wove of the spiny branches of the thorn a sort of helmet or crown of thorns, and put it on His Head, pressing it down with their spears. The long sharp thorns pierce through the flesh, and the Precious Blood trickles down over His forehead and fills His eyes, blinding Him, and causing Him fresh pain and misery.

2. This crowning of thorns was to atone for our proud thoughts, impure thoughts, uncharitable thoughts; the trickling blood, covering His sacred face for our wretched vanity and desire to beautify ourselves in the sight of men; the blinding of His eyes for our immodest looks, careless looks, looks of curiosity and pride. O, my Lord, how varied were the sufferings Thou hadst to undergo for my manifold sins!

3. Each form of suffering endured by the Son of God will have its own appropriate reward for His Sacred

Humanity. As for each stripe a fresh ray of glory, for each insult a new song of praise from Angels and Saints, so the crown He will wear in Heaven will be glorious in proportion to the suffering and the ignominy of the crown of thorns. The same will be true of all His Saints. Every pang they have suffered for Him will have its own glorious recompense, and so too all that we endure for Him will have a corresponding and appropriate reward in Heaven.

25th Day—The Fifth Shedding of the Precious Blood

1. On the summit of Calvary, stretched upon the rough Cross, with His arms extended along the cross-pieces which are to form the horizontal part of it, lies the Son of God, already wounded, covered with blood, exhausted by suffering and by His repeated falls upon the way. Surely the executioners will be satisfied with the ordinary method of tying His arms to the Cross, and leaving Him thus to die. No; for the innocent, spotless Lamb of God, new tortures are in store. Huge nails are placed in the centre of His Hands, and with cruel strokes of a heavy mallet driven through His delicate, sensitive palms. The blows are struck; the Precious Blood gushes forth, and Jesus moans under the exquisite pain which thrills through every nerve.

2. O Jesus! how can we bear to see Thee thus wounded! Those Hands were ever stretched forth to do good to all, to heal sorrows, and cure diseases. They never did aught but good; how then can cruel men be so ungrateful, so barbarous, so impious as to requite Thee thus? O, may I learn to sorrow with Thy anguish, and, like Thy most Holy Mother, to join my compassion to Thy Passion.

3. Yet sad and strange to say my actions correspond but ill to the expressions of my sorrow. It is for the sins committed by my stretched-out hands that Thou art suffering; for my selfishness, unkindness, immodesty, anger, covetousness. How shall I compensate Thee for my share in this cruelty? O, help me to do so, and show me how I can do so.

26th Day—The Sixth Shedding of the Precious Blood

1. Not the Hands alone that did for man those works of love, but also the Feet, that went about doing good, were pierced by the cruel nails. It seems as if men were bent on requiting with evil the very limbs that were employed for the good of man. They not only hated Jesus without a cause, but they hated Him for His love to them. Such is man when he is in Satan's power. Such have I too often been; so ungrateful to God, rebelling against the means which He employed to heal my soul and deliver me from sin.

2. What must have been the unutterable agony of those Three Hours during which the Sacred Body of our Lord was dragging with all its weight on the Wounds in His Hands and Feet! Who can describe it? The agony that racked each nerve, so that there was no sound part in His Body; the utter exhaustion; and, worst of all, the agonizing thirst that was the effect of the continual streams which drained His Sacred Body of the Precious Blood. Who can imagine it? "Behold and see, all who pass by the way, whether there is any sorrow like to My sorrow?"

3. Yet these Wounds, inflicted by man's malignity, are now employed by Jesus as arguments pleading for mercy for sinners at His Father's hands. O Jesus, when shall I forgive, as Thou didst forgive me? When shall I learn that it is a privilege and a glory to return good for evil, and so to resemble Thee?

27th Day—The Seventh Shedding of the Precious Blood

1. Even when the work of redemption was consummated, and Jesus had breathed forth His Soul into His Father's hands, He shed once more His Precious Blood for man. It was to mark the completeness of His Sacrifice that He thus poured forth, as it were, the last drop that still lingered in His Sacred Heart. It was a sign that He kept nothing in reserve. He proved His inexhaustible love to man by this last act by which He bequeathed to man the last trace of life that still remained. O undying, unwavering love of Jesus, that loved us with an extremity of love unto the very end.

2. The water and the blood that issued from our Lord's side were the symbols of the two chief sacraments: the water, of Holy Baptism, and the blood, of the Blessed Eucharist. Thus it was that Christ is said, by this piercing of His side, to have laid the foundations of the Church; and as Eve, the spouse of Adam, was formed from the side of Adam,

so the Church, the sacred Spouse of Christ, was formed from His side when the spear of the centurion pierced it. Pray for an intense love of Holy Church, on account of the love that Christ bears to His own true spouse.

3. The centurion little knew the meaning and import of his act when he pierced the side of Jesus. Tradition describes him as having some affection of the eyes, and the blood sprinkled upon him cured his sight in a moment. At the same time grace touched his heart, and he was converted. O wondrous power of the Sacred Blood of Christ!

28th Day—The Precious Blood In Baptism

1. In Baptism the Precious Blood washes away from the soul of the new-born child, or of the adult who approaches the sacrament in good dispositions, the stain of original sin. This privilege extends to all whether within the Church or outside of it who are validly baptized with water, if the words prescribed are used, and the intention on the part of him who administers it is to do that which the Catholic Church does in the baptism of her children. Thus through the power of the Precious Blood hundreds and thousands of little children are enabled to see the face of God for ever in Heaven.

2. It is not merely the absence of what is hateful to God that is the result of Baptism. The soul of the baptized child receives a share of all the perfections and graces won for us by the Precious Blood. It is not merely cleansed, but sanctified. It is not colourless like water, but red with the charity of which the Precious Blood is the sign and symbol. It is filled with all the gifts of the Holy Ghost; the virtues of faith, hope, and charity are poured into it. It is beautiful exceedingly in God's sight, for it has a supernatural likeness to him.

3. This beauty remains in the soul of all baptized persons until they commit a mortal sin. It goes on increasing with every action done for God. Nothing can take it from us except a deliberate or grave act of disobedience to His holy law. Pray for a continually increasing sense of the incomparable beauty of baptismal innocence.

29th Day—The Precious Blood in the Sacrament of Penance

1. The task of the Precious Blood in Baptism seems a comparatively light one side by side with that which it performs in the Sacrament of Penance. In Baptism, original sin is washed away; in Penance, actual sin. The former cleaves to us through no fault of our own; the latter is the result of our own deliberate deed. It makes us the enemies of God in quite a different sense from that which is the result of original sin. It places us, or rather, we place ourselves of our own free-will, under the power of Satan; voluntarily we forfeit our inheritance, and proclaim ourselves rebels. The task of reconciliation is a far more difficult one, and is only possible with our own co-operation.

2. Yet the Precious Blood restores the sinner to his allegiance, and frees him from the power of Satan, when he comes really anxious to be delivered. As soon as it touches the soul of the sinner, it washes it clean and pure as if he had never sinned, and restores him to peace and friendship with God. Who has not witnessed its transforming power, and seen the sinner, before hardened, depressed, almost in despair, now become full of peace and consolation and joy under its Divine influence.

3. We cannot wonder at our Lord's cry of agony in Gethsemane, or at His sweat of blood, when we think what it was that the Precious Blood had to efface from our souls. What an accumulated horror of pride and selfishness and impurity and covetousness! Such a cleansing could only be gained at the cost of a sacrifice infinite in value. O Jesus! make me to appreciate more Thy Divine love.

30th Day—The Precious Blood In Holy Communion

1. If in other sacraments the Precious Blood is morally applied to the souls of those who receive them, in Holy Communion it is physically communicated to body as well as soul. We have the wonderful privilege of being brought into bodily contact with the Precious Blood, whether it be under the species of wine in the chalice, or of bread in the Sacred Host. How pure our bodies should be if they are thus to touch the source of all purity, the Holy of Holies, the God Whose infinite purity is such that the very Angels are not pure in His sight—how can we venture thus to touch Christ Himself? to receive the Precious Blood into our sinful and impure bodies?

2. Yet Christ our Lord invites us to do so. In His inexplicable love for us, He desires us, asks us, to receive His Precious Blood in Holy Communion. Instead of saying, as He did to Mary, Touch Me not; He says, Drink, O My

friends, and be inebriated, O My dearly beloved. Admire His Divine condescension, and beware of presuming on His patience and His love.

3. How are we to account for Jesus' willingness, nay, anxiety to be thus received by sinful men? It is because in thus communicating Himself to us, He makes us more like to what He Himself is, and what He desires us to be. The Precious Blood imparts to our souls all heavenly gifts and graces if we receive it as we ought. O Jesus! grant that I may receive Thee frequently, fervently, with a complete oblation of my whole self!

31st Day—The Precious Blood In Heaven

1. In Heaven, the Precious Blood of Jesus will not only share the glory of His Sacred Humanity, but it will be the source of its Divine beauty, for the glory of Jesus will then consist in having bought us with a great price, and that price was none other than His Precious Blood. It will be a continual source of joy and thanksgiving to us, and will ever remind us of our ransom from sin and Hell, and of the unspeakable blessings we shall then enjoy. Grant, O Lord, that I may share that joy!

2. The special glory of the Precious Blood appears to be ever present in the minds of the redeemed in Heaven, and to form the subject of their songs of praise. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honour and glory and power." "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God in Thy Blood." "We have washed our robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb." If this is to be the continual song of Heaven, we must try and anticipate it on earth by cultivating a devotion to the Precious Blood of Jesus.

3. The Precious Blood will also receive the unceasing homage of the Blessed in Heaven on account of its having won for them all their graces. It purchased for them the glory that they now enjoy. In the overflowing of their hearts they will recognize it as the fount of all those delights that will inebriate their souls. Through it they drink of the waters of life, through it they gaze in ecstasy on the glory of Jesus, through it they are absorbed in the Beatific Vision. O my Lord! it is to Thy Precious Blood that I owe everything in this life, and shall owe my eternal happiness in the life to come. Oh, make me full of unspeakable gratitude to Thee now and for ever!
