

NINETEENTH DAY.

The Flower of Sorrow and Joy.

"And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his wisdom and his answers. And seeing *him* they wondered. And his mother said to him: Son, why hast thou done so to us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing."—*Luke*, ii.

JESUS was twelve years of age. The Paschal feast was approaching. With Mary and Joseph,—and tradition says on foot,—Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Though God and not bound by law, He was a Hebrew and strictly observed the law. What a lesson this to Christians.

They reached the Holy City and performed all things according to the ordinances.

Between Joseph and Mary in His own Temple Jesus knelt down to pray. God on earth in the form of a beautiful boy prays to God in heaven. What a mystery! Too deep for words. The feast closed. And not one in all those multitudes that thronged the Temple knew that in their midst moved the feet of Him who had come to bring salvation. The Feast closed. In the afternoon the worshipers left the city. The men passed out through one gate and the women through another to meet again at night-fall. During this afternoon's journey Joseph and Mary were sepa-

rated. When they met at the closing of the day where was the child Jesus? With neither.

And a great fear came on Joseph and Mary's heart was filled with a strange terror. Jesus was gone. Whither? The Boy was lost. How and why? How the mystery of His sudden disappearance filled their souls with darkness. Just this morning beside them in the Temple,—so fair, so beautiful, with the very light of heaven in His face to their eyes,—and now gone. He had given no sign. He had said no word. He had let them leave the Temple and the city without Him and without a warning. It was so unlike Him. They turned their faces towards the Holy City. Night came on; but a darker night fell on their souls. Fear and love gave strength to their weary feet. It was very dark. Did Mary think of the Christmas night and its angels when He came to the world? No angels to-night and no *Gloria* of joy. Only a dumb, desolate sorrow. It was the first time she was without Him. How they hurried back! Her heart was crying out for her lost child. On the still night air trembled the mother's prayers. The stars shone on the tears that flowed from her grief-filled eyes.

For the waves of a starless sea of sorrow swept stormily over her soul. Ah! mothers with lost children have known griefs similar but never equal to her's. For never a mother had a son like her's. In the dark they reach the city and in the dark they enter it. Where did they spend the rest of that desolate night? Did they go straight to the vestibule of the Temple to wait till the morning would open its gates? Or did they wander up and down the narrow streets seeking in the dark for Him who was their only light?

Dawn in the East and the Temple doors were opened. He was not there. Where had He gone? Had He gone out to Calvary and spent the night amid its gray rocks? The weary search went on. They made inquiries of those they met. And how Mary could describe her child? But no one had seen Him. Another day's search but all in vain. Dawned the third day. Was it an inspiration or was it only the presentiment of a mother's heart that turned their steps towards the Temple?

* * * * That day the teachers of the law were assembled. The Scriptures were in their hands. They were reading and expounding the Law and the Prophets. Suddenly into their midst came a boy fair to look upon with something of more than human beauty in His face. It was unusual for a child thus to come amid their deliberations. But somehow His coming did not seem an intrusion. It was as if He had a right to be there. In their midst He stood listening to them and asking them questions. They wondered at His wisdom and His answers. The promised Messiah of forty centuries,—twelve years of age,—looked into their faces,—with His questions and His answers stirred their souls;—and they, with the Scriptures in their hands, did not recognize Him. The Boy to them was only a wonder. An old Prophet had written His name would be called Wonderful.

Will He now reveal Himself and show unto them that the Wonder in their midst is their very God? No,—He must bide His time.

A silence fell on the Assembly—one of those strange hushes that follow one mystery and precede another.

Footsteps were heard approaching.

Swiftly to where the fair boy stood came Mary and Joseph. It was a second wonder. And the Teachers heard a voice with a mother's pathos in it while the light of joy shone on her face: "Son why hast thou done so to us: behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing?" The teachers knew the aged carpenter and they had not forgotten the face of Mary. The Boy and the Mother looked strangely alike. And the Boy spoke: "How is it that you sought Me: do you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" Did the teachers think that the Boy was about Joseph's business,—for had not Mary said: "your Father and I sought thee?" Yes the mystery is not yet to be revealed. Mary took the Boy's fair hand in hers and led Him from the Temple. Her sorrow had blossomed into joy.

"And He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them. And Jesus increased in wisdom, age and grace before God and man." The sorrow of the three days brightened into the joys of eighteen years. Eighteen years more must the world wait for the Teacher. Why let the world wait? Why give thirty years of His life to His Mother and only three years to the world?

Why this seclusion in Nazareth? Why the silence unbroken by a word to the world resting on those eighteen years? The communings of mother and child are not for the world. They are sacred and secret. Thrice only in public and in the hearing of others He addressed His Mother,—in the Temple where she found Him,—at the wedding feast in Cana and on Mount Calvary.

But the words that passed between them at home

have been buried in a silence which not one inspired writer has invaded.

But ah! the constant interchange of thought between Jesus and Mary during those eighteen years must be full of the mysteries of human and divine love! How her soul must have been filled with the light of those mysteries which we see only in shadow! It is again for years and years mother and child. Nazareth is more than a city,—it is an argument. Of what? Of the indissoluble bond between Jesus and Mary. And of what else? He was subject to her. He obeyed her. He acknowledged all her rights and powers as His Mother and fulfilled all His duties towards her as her son.

Has He ever annulled His Mother's rights? When?—Once a mother,—a mother forever. He must break the birth-bond,—He must sunder the blood tie before He can compel His Mother to abdicate her rights. He must go against the face of the eternal decree by which He elected to become Mary's child.

Has He ever taken away her power? Why and how? Did He ever reach an hour in His life here below,—or has He reached an hour in His glorified life in heaven when to her, who said: "Be it done unto me according to thy word:" He has said or could say: "What you my Mother ask will not be done according to thy word?" No—no,—the rights, the powers, the privileges of her who is the Mother of the Eternal King will last as long as He reigns. He has never emancipated Himself from the sceptre of His Mother's love. He was subject to her in the earthly Nazareth,—and because her will is perfectly united to the divine will, He is still subject to her in the heavenly Nazareth. * * * *

So sweetly—peacefully and silence-veiled went on the days at Nazareth. In the city there was a synagogue. There on every Sabbath day knelt the Holy Family in prayer. The Christ in silence listened to the readings of the Scriptures; and never did human soul feel such reverence for the divine word as did His. He was in their midst and they knew Him only as the aged carpenter's son. On other days He worked for Joseph was growing feeble. Came a day when Joseph was missed in the synagogue. Only Jesus and Mary came. And so for Sabbath after Sabbath. It was in the order of Providence that the Foster-father should pass away from earth before his Foster-son would face the world. It came at last. Did the Foster-Son anticipate the time and baptize with Christian Baptism the last and greatest Hebrew patriarch?

In the arms of Jesus and Mary he calmly died.

Ah! what a death! They laid him away with his fathers,—and now Jesus and Mary were alone. Their hearts grew closer together. Every day He entered the little shop to toil for His Mother's support. Once she fed Him. Now He feeds her. Often a great fear crept into her heart and whitened her all pure face;—for she knew the day of separation was coming fast.

It came a day of deepest human sorrow to Jesus as well as to Mary. Ah! love wants the face of the loved one to look on. It is so in the glorious heavens where the face of God will be an eternal need eternally gratified. It is so in this sorrowful world where hearts, though they know and are happy to know that they love one another, still want one another's face, and still want to hear the tones of one another's voice. Their loves are not going to part,—that she knows,—

but He is going to take His face away—the face that has been her heaven of human joy for thirty long years. Did Mary's Son kneel down to get His Mother's blessing before He went out alone into the world? For alone He must go to do His mighty work. Or did He ask her consent to go forth and die for the world? Asked or not asked she gave it.

Three years,—awful years for Him with Calvary at the close. The moment came. Mother and Son embraced. They were human and they wept. He turned away from peaceful Nazareth with His face towards the Jordan. Mary entered her humble home. What passed there only angels knew. It was like an agony that separation. Ah Mary! your Jesus is truly lost to you now,—but it must be so because He is going to save the lost. Did angels come to comfort her?

When after a while He will preach to the people,—to His Father in heaven will be ascending from Mary in far off Nazareth the mightiest prayers that ever heaven heard. For her prayers had part in His three years ministry.

Jesus preaching,—Mary, praying—ah me! how could men resist? Oh! Mary crowned in heaven! pray for us with the heart of a Mother and the power of a Queen that we may never resist the graces sent us by thy Son.

ASPIRATION.

“SEND forth thy light and thy truth: they have conducted me, and brought me unto thy holy hill, and into thy tabernacles. And I will go in to the altar of God: to God who giveth joy to my youth.”—*Psalm*, xlii.

PRAYER.

GRANT, we beseech thee, O Lord, that both the course of the world may be peaceably ordered for us by thy governance, and that thy Church may rejoice in tranquil devotion.



TWENTIETH DAY.

The Flower of the Wedding-feast.

"His Mother said to the waiters: Whatsoever he shall say to you,—do ye."—*Luke ii, 5.*

JESUS went down to the Jordan and was baptized by His cousin John the Baptist. Then He went into the desert; fasted forty days, was tempted by the devil; bade him begone,—and he went; returned from the desert; called a few disciples who followed Him; began to teach in the synagogues and was followed by many; and at last came to Nazareth. What a meeting it must have been when He entered His Mother's home. How soon He returns to her! He had a reason. There is nothing accidental in His life. His mother has a work to do before He separates Himself from her only to meet again on Calvary. Three days after the calling of His first disciples "there was a marriage in Cana" (not far from Nazareth) "and," writes St. John, "the mother of Jesus was there." And Jesus was invited with His disciples to the marriage. Mary, who perhaps presided at the feast, saw, with a woman's quick intuition, that wine was wanting; and said to Jesus: "They have no wine." Simple words,—but strange. Had she ever seen Him exercise His omnipotent power? In the flight to Egypt and return had He procured, out in the bleak desert, food and drink for her and Joseph, by the use

of divine power? Her request almost implies as much. And if not, she knew her Son was God. Just as strange was His reply: "Woman, what have I to do with thee: My hour is not yet come." It seemed like a harsh refusal softened only by the reason He gave. His hour had not yet come. But the mother knew her Son better than the guests. Mayhap some said: "He has refused her." She said to the servants: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do ye." There were six water-pots of stone; and Jesus said to the servants: "Fill the water-pots with water." And they did so. And He said: "Draw out now and bring to the ruler of the feast." And they obeyed. The ruler of the feast tasted the water made wine;—so did the guests;—and a great wonder filled the room. St. John writes: "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory and His disciples believed in Him." They had listened to the glory of His words,—for no man spake as He; and had followed Him. Now manifest to them is the glory of His power—and they believe in Him. Yes,—there was a reason why His mother should be present at the feast. She had brought Him into this world by miracle. She had given Him that body which enshrined omnipotence and it was but right and fitting that the first exercise of His power should be at her request. Through her the humility of the God-man was first manifested in Bethlehem; and through her the glory of the Man-God, in the beginning of His ministry, is first made manifest at the wedding feast of Cana. But said He not: "My time is not yet come?" And at His mother's simple words: "They have no wine" He anticipates His time, works His

first miracle,—shows His power,—displays His glory—and now His disciples believe in Him. To be the cause of the manifestation of His glory is glorious enough:—Oh Mary! but most glorious is it to have been the cause of that first faith which began that day in Cana in the souls of the first few disciples and which will last strong and unshaken as long as this world shall exist! Yes—Mary the Mother of Christ is the mother of the first faith in Him;—and that faith like Mary—will be always a virgin pure from any stain of error;—and always a mother bringing forth in every age innumerable children, down to the consummation of the world. Yes indeed there was a reason,—and more than one, why Jesus should meet His mother at the feast. It was a marriage feast. Marriage is the appointed means whereby our race is perpetuated. Marriage must be holy, and to be so,—must have God's blessing,—and to have it, husband and wife must love one another and have reverence for one another's body. Else marriage loses its purity. That lost,—marriage sinks into degradation. Mary the great Mother of Christ and of His posterity was there as a model for all mothers. Mary the Virgin was there in all the glory of her purity to signify that purity should guard motherhood. The laws of human generation are sacred. Mary is present at the feast held in honor of those laws to attest their sacredness. Ah! how those laws are dishonored! And then? Unhappiness. And then? How often infidelity? And then? How often divorce? Why dishonored? Jesus and His mother were not at the wedding feast. The world was there with its congratulations. Fashion was there with its finery. But grace was absent. No wonder there are

so many miserable marriages! No wonder that fretful husbands and complaining wives are met with everywhere and every day! They have missed their wedding-blessing or they have lost it and are not willing to strive by prayer and sacraments to win it back again. Nor need we marvel that this tells on the children, disturbs society, sometimes dishonors the Church and leads to ills temporal and spiritual beyond all reckoning. In the pastorals of nearly all the Bishops the question of marriage holds a prominent place. They are not only teachers of truth but they are the guardians of the sacraments. Faith without the sacraments is a sky without the sun. The Bishops of the Church see that as the world is drifting farther and farther away from the safe moorings of Christ's teachings,—no sacrament is in greater peril of losing its sanctities by moral shipwreck in society than that of matrimony. Entered into too hastily,—a matter of mere human love and sometimes alas! human passion, without the preparation of prayer and the presence of supernatural grace,—marriage is losing its sacredness among the married.

The honor of the faith is often yielded and the laws of Holy Church transgressed in mixed marriages. The children of the same faith should marry together without seeking, and then only for gravest reasons, outside connections.

Over the order of human generation Jesus and Mary must preside that it may have heaven's blessing.

But let us ascend to the order of regeneration where grace reigns over souls.

In that order the feast is everlasting and Jesus with His mother presides. Every holy thought,—every pious

desire, every fervent prayer,—every act done for eternity,—every sacrament received and all the other countless things that go to make up the supernatural life have relations to Jesus and His Mother. Where He is,—she is as well; He with His saving mercy, she with her mother-love. In every feast of grace in our souls Jesus and Mary meet.

Oh Mary Queen of heaven pray that sin may never enter our souls to cast a shadow on those sweet interior feasts we keep when Jesus comes in all His love to sanctify them more; and we know He will bring a mother's blessing with Him.

ASPIRATION.

“SON! they have no wine.”

PRAYER.

FAVORABLY hear our supplications, O Lord, and graciously protect thy institution which thou hast ordained for the propagation of mankind: that the union made by thy appointment may be preserved by thy aid.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY.

The Flower of Mary's Martyrdom.

FIRST PART.

“And thy own heart a sword shall pierce that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed.”—*Luke ii, 35.*

AMID the splendors of the Transfiguration of Jesus on Mount Thabor, Peter loth to leave the place, cried out in the rapture of his heart: “Oh Lord! it is good for us to be here!” Thabor was a Calvary in the Light. Calvary is a Thabor in the Dark. And loth to leave the mount of mercy,—as He hung on the cross three long hours, let us linger three days amid its mysteries that we may learn more (we never can learn all) of the relations of the Mother of Jesus with His Passion and our Redemption. Two souls were never more united than theirs on Calvary. Two sorrows were never more as one. That union lasted not only during those three hours that passed on Calvary. It lasts forever; for the Passion, at which Mary was not only a spectator but in which as His Mother she was an actor,—is eternal. She had given Him that sacred flesh which was bruised,—that blood which was shed,—that form which was nailed to the cross. The drops of His precious blood that redden the rocks had their far-off sinless fount in the heart of Mary. They began to flow from her heart on the day of the Annuncia-

tion,—nine months invisibly till Christmas night came and the Child was born. Then for months He was nursed on her sinless breast and drew the nourishment of His life from her sinless body. The blood was hers no longer. It was His only each drop of it united to Divinity. But still in the beginning it had been hers—and what she gave Him, He gave us for our Redemption. He was her's before He became ours. He became our Saviour as her son as man as really in the temporal order as he was in the eternal order Son of the Father.

From His Mother He received that human life in human body, which He laid down for our salvation. That body, in the eternal decrees, was necessary for our Redemption. From the Eternal Father, by eternal generation, He received (if we can use that word for lack of another) His divinity which made the reparation, wrought through His body, of infinite value. So in the decrees of God Mary was as necessary to the human part of the Passion as was the Father to the divine part. Now the divine and human elements of the Passion are eternal in their effects; and therefore Mary His Mother has part in every effect that flows from the Passion. The history of Christianity is the continuation of the Passion. Christian life finds its roots in His death;—two roots,—one in the human soul and body—the other in His Divinity. The body to His human soul united comes from Mary,—His Divinity, from the Father. Therefore as His Father has,—as He has,—so Mary His Mother has part in every single effect of His Passion. Out of the Passion came the Church and the sacraments; and therefore His mother stands in everlasting relationship with the

sacraments and the Church. Every sanctification of soul,—every salvation of sinner,—every sanctity of saint flows from the Passion, and therefore intimately, inseparably, everlastingly related to the Passion, Mary is intimately, indissolubly, and forever connected with the work of the Passion in the soul of every saint and sinner.

The action of the Church is the perpetuation of Christ's Passion. Therefore as in His Passion so in the action of the Church Mary holds by mother's right a necessary place,—and that place highest, next to His. She stands forever by the Cross and she stands forever within the Church. You can no more thrust her out of His Church than you could have thrust her away from the cross. You cannot take the cross and Him without taking her. They go together. They stay together. They do the grand work of this world's salvation together. "What God has placed together you cannot put asunder."

Jesus alone is the Mediator. His Redemption of us is infinite. Mary, sinless as she was, with all her merits could not have atoned for a single sin; could not have saved a single sinner. Christ's Infinite Redemption of sinners is as incommunicable as His Divinity.

But do not the elect co-operate with Jesus in the Redemption of the world? Do they not, as St. Paul writes: "fill up in their bodies that which is lacking of the sufferings of Christ, for His body's sake, which is the Church?" And this co-operation is real and substantial. By His merits have they not acquired the power of meriting? Do not their works satisfy for sins not only for their own sins but for the lesser

sins of others, by their union with His? But the co-operation of all the saints together does not and cannot equal the co-operation of Mary.

Their co-operation is but a shadow compared to her's. For her co-operation is based upon her Divine Maternity; and that, in God's decrees, was indispensable. The consent which she gave to the Incarnation involved her consent to the Passion. Her will was in it all as well as God's will. Her will is in it still and will be in it forever. So that in a limited, finite sense we may well and accurately call Mary, His Mother Co-Redemptress. For without her we would not have had Him as our Redeemer. It could have been otherwise if God had willed it otherwise in eternity. He did not so will it. Therefore it is as it is and can never be otherwise than as it is. It was God's free decree. It was realized. Mary is an essential part of that realization;—and remains so forever.—Why,—did He not say it: "My words shall never pass away?" And they have not and never shall. Is not Mary mother of the Word made flesh greater than the words that fell from His lips? Can she ever pass away out of the sight of Faith? Does not Faith demand her everlasting presence as mother to believe and prove that God was man,—man, because, her own son? Is not His mother greater than His words? Why,—she gave Him the very lips that spoke the words? "Never man spake as He"—His very enemies said. And that man was her own and only Son. His words will go down the ages full of grace and truth and light and spiritual life;—and tell me! must the mother who gave Him the lips to speak salvation to all ages retire into the background of history,—to

become a mere beautiful memory,—nothing but a name? No—no,—as she stood by the cross for three hours the mother of the Crucified she must stand by His words forever the mother of the Teacher of men. His words are human as His form on the cross was human. His mother proves the humanity of that crucified form and His Mother proves the humanity (if I can so write) of His undying words. His human words are like His human body. It shrined a divine person. They shrine divine thoughts. The body, with its human soul and human lips to speak human words enshrining divine thoughts, came from Mary His Mother. Wherever His words go,—she goes. She is more than a memory,—more than a name. She is the mother of His words as well as of Himself. For their human tone they lean on her, for their divine teachings they lean solely on Him.

The words of the Word-made-Flesh need His mother in person to prove that they are human words as well as they need Himself in person to prove that they are words divine. So therefore, the invisible presences of Jesus and His Mother are justly demanded by the eyes of Faith, as witnesses of His human-divine words wherever they are preached. She witnessed the crucifixion; and she must witness forever the preaching of "Jesus Christ and Him Crucified."

Now listen! all ye who preach His name and words!

Do you give His Mother her rightful and necessary place? Do you take His words into your pulpits and bid His Mother stay outside the doors of your churches? Do you preach "Christ and Him Crucified" without saying a word of her, the witness of His Passion? Do you preach the words of the Word-made-flesh and put the

Mother of that Word Incarnate aside? Then surely is your preaching false,—false to Him because false to her,—false to both, because false to the very Scriptures in your pulpits. It is a wonder that the calm, sweet words of Holy-writ on Scripture's pages do not frown upon you in wrath! Have you not read in the closing of God's Revelations: "And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life and out of the holy city?"

And if you take away any of the words of the Book—by thrusting aside His Mother,—it is more than taking away words,—it is an offence against Christ Himself personally,—it is a crime against the Word-made-flesh who came to dwell forever amongst us as God—Son of the Eternal Father,—as Man,—Son of Mary, His Mother,—for wheresoever He, through His representatives witnesseth to the Truth she must witness to the Truth of truths that He is man because He is her Son.

Representatives did I say? His true representatives must represent Him and His Mother forever and ever working together for man's salvation.

Alas! there are Maryless, Motherless Churches (so-called.) They will have nothing to do with her,—though from her they receive their Christ. Christ was not Motherless. His true Church—made to His likeness, cannot be Motherless. His Mother is her Mother, for her Son is the head of the Church. Oh! holy Church! re-living the life of Jesus;—clothed with His sanctities,—enshrining His everlasting Presence,—possessing His powers,—infallible witness of His truths,—executor of His will; thou hast not forgotten His last

legacy on Calvary to His well-beloved disciples: "Behold thy Mother!" Wherever thou goest and wherever thou preachest "Christ and Him Crucified," thou dost keep forever in the sight of true Faith the Mother who "stood beside the Cross." Thou dost frame the Name of Jesus in the name of Mary as he was fashioned in her sinless womb. Thou art true to Calvary and its Passion;—thou art true to the Son and true to the Mother;—and wherever thou goest—"Jesus and Mary,"—"Mary and Jesus," are sounded by thy lips together and forever,—an everlasting hymn of only two notes of only two names—telling the true and full story of Man's redemption.

ASPIRATION.

"Be it done unto me according to thy will."

PRAYER.

O God, in whose passion, according to the prophecy of Simeon, a sword of grief pierced through the most sweet soul of thy glorious virgin mother Mary: mercifully grant that we who celebrate the memory of her dolours may obtain the happy effect of thy passion.