

be long conversant with God's love and long conversant with our own nothingness, before the first indications of this choice and beautiful grace will be discerned upon the surface of our conduct. But what a model of it is our Blessed Mother embalming the Body of her Son! We can tell how dear to her is that Body, even though she gives way to no outward gesture of endearment. We can tell how sacred it is, though there is no visible display of worship. We could almost divine it was the Body of God from the very undemonstrative self-collection of her demeanor, so completely does it blend that familiarity and reverence which belong only to an object of adoration. See her face, watch her fingers, sound her heart; it is all one grace playing everywhere! Yet there are few lessons in the world of the Incarnation deeper than these,—that Mary knew that Jesus was God, and yet dared to use the rights of maternal tenderness toward Him, and that she lived with Him as her Son for Three-and-Thirty Years in the most amazing intercourse of familiar love, and yet never for one moment either forgot that He was God or forgot what was due to Him as God. Out of these two truths alone must we perforce build a pedestal for our Lady, whose top shall be far above out of our sight; and where then shall she be who is to be raised thereon?

We must note also her spirit of studious, minute, and special reparation. Not the love of all possible worlds would be enough to pay Jesus back for the least pain He suffered for us, or for one single drop of the copious streams of Blood which He vouchsafed to shed. As God, the least of His humiliations is

utterly beyond the reach of our compensations. The saints in all ages have marvellously loved and adored His Passion, and by supernatural penances and in mystical conformities have imitated its dread mysteries. Yet all their love together came not so nigh a just reparation to Him, as the worship of Mary while she prepared Him for the grave. The near sight of what He had really endured was something quite different from her presence at the Passion, while its various mysteries were being enacted at some distance from her. It took her down into the depths of the Passion, close to our Lord Himself, and whither no contemplative has ever penetrated. Her science and her Mother's heart combined to read and interpret those fearful documents, which were written within and without His Body, like Ezekiel's book, "lamentations, and canticles, and woes," as neither angel nor saint could interpret them. Ever as her fingers moved with the embalming, acts of worship and reparatory love out of the interior magnificences of her soul went along with them. She saw the number and the weight and the kind and the aggravation of all those sins, which found there their proper and distinct expiations; and for each and all she made the most wonderful reparations. This spirit of reparation is one of the instincts of divine love. While the angels by our sides perform their ministries of vigilant affection, they never cease beholding God. So in like manner the servants of God go forth into the world in search of God's outraged glory, to make reparation for it, while in the mean time they never stir out of that abiding sense of their own sinfulness, which is the atmosphere

of true humility. But Mary had no sense of sin, and her humility was more deeply rooted than that of St. Michael himself, the most zealous of the angels, because he was also the most humble. The reparations of Mary therefore were in a sphere by themselves. The saints are in a measure expiating their own sins, even while they are expiating the sins of others. But Mary's reparations were the worship of a sinless creature. As Christ satisfied for us, because we could not satisfy for ourselves, so Mary worshipped His Passion for us as well as for herself, because we are unable to do it worthily ourselves, and she is our mother, and, by our Lord's own gift, what is hers is in some most real sense ours also. It was not time for reparation until now. Its natural place is in the sixth dolor, when the work of cruelty has ceased, and the huge world-sin has been consummated. Where complaint, or virtuous indignation, or loud appeals to divine justice, would have come in others, there came in Mary a busy, silent, tender reparation. Oh, it is a joy to think that, if our sins were in the lashes of the scourge and the spikes of the thorny crown, our hands also were in our Mother's hands, composing and embalming the Body of our Saviour, and filling in as if with posthumous healing those deep-red hieroglyphics which sin had left thereon!

We have already spoken of the perseverance of our Lady's tranquility through the varying phases of her martyrdom. But we must not omit to enumerate it here among the heroic dispositions in which she endured her sixth dolor. It is by far the most wonderful thing about the interior life of her soul, so far at

least as we are allowed to see into it. There seems to be no height of holiness which may not be predicated of such a marvellous tranquility. It is a token, not so much of a process of sanctification still going on, as of the deification of a human soul completed. It comes nearest of all graces to the denial of created imperfections. Inequality, surprise, mutability, inconsistency, hesitation, doubt, vacillation, failure, astonishment,—these are all what might be called in geological language the *faults* in created sanctity. They are the imprints which human infirmity has left upon the work before it was set and hardened. They are the marks of catastrophe, which is itself a mark of feebleness. From all these, so far as we can see, our Lady's incomparable tranquility preserved her. To her there seems to have been communicated some portion of that peace of God which Scripture says "surpasseth all understanding," and whose special office toward ourselves is "to keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." No one thing explains so much of our Blessed Lady's grandeur as this heavenly calm. Apparent exaggerations find their place, their meaning, and their connection, when they are viewed in the light of this tranquility. Graces, which sound impossible when stated by themselves, settle down in this tranquility, disclosed distinctly by its light, and at the same time softened and made natural by its beauty. The Heart of Jesus alone can read the riddle of Mary aright; but this dovelike peace, this almost divinely pacific spirit, is the nearest reading of the riddle of her immense holiness to which we can attain. It is as if God had clothed her with His attribute of

mercy for our sakes, with His attribute of peace for her own.

We learn two lessons for ourselves in this sixth dolor. Our Lady is at once a model to us of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and a model also of behavior in time of grief. We have already seen how allusions to the Blessed Sacrament flit before us continually in this dolor. From Mary's demeanor we may now gather what our own devotion to that dread mystery ought to be. For the sixth dolor is as it were perpetuated in the Church until the end of time. As our Blessed Lord is daily offered in the Mass, and the selfsame 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, as is ever the case with those things which we have from Jesus and Mary, 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! It was not the attitude of a mother toward a son, but rather of the creature toward the Creator. She adored it with divine worship. She held it in her arms until the rest had adored it also. Her rights as a Mother were merged in her service as a creature. 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 and dread, more self-abasing, more profound. We have no Mother's rights. We are not, like Joseph of Arimathea, doing Jesus a service by ministering to His Body. The obligation is all on our side. He has come down again from heaven to us. We are not gone up to the Cross to take Him down. 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. Our act of receiving should be a silent act of holy eager fear and breathless worship. 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. At Benediction, and when praying before the Tabernacle, the Blessed Sacrament should breed in us continually a spirit of unresting adoration, unresting as that incessant cry which the astonished Seraphim and Cherubim are continually uttering at the sight of the unimaginable holiness of God.

To this reverence we must add tranquility, or, rather, out of this reverence will come tranquility. The spirit of worship is a spirit of quietness. We must not disquiet ourselves in order to deepen our reverence. We must not disturb ourselves by making efforts. We must gently submit ourselves to be overruled, constrained, and gradually calmed by the

present majesty of God. Neither must we look into our own souls to see if we are worshipping, nor make any other reflex acts upon the processes which are going on within us. Under the pretence of keeping up our attention, all this is but so much occupation with self, and so much distraction from the presence of Jesus. Hence it is that so many Communion bring forth so little fruit. It is from the want of quietness. An unprepared Communion can hardly ever be a quiet one. The very object of the preparation is to clear our hearts of the worldly images which possess them, and which, if not expelled beforehand, will become importunate distractions at the very moment when adoration should rule within us tranquil and alone. Hence also it is that the best preparation for the Blessed Sacrament consists by no means in endeavoring to stimulate our affections by devout considerations, in order to warm our cold hearts and raise our fervor to a proper pitch. In truth, it is not in our power to do so. For the ardor, or the seeming ardor, which we produce, is unnatural because it is violent, and so it is not only short-lived, but it is followed by a reaction proportioned to the efforts we have made. A feeble fire is extinguished by the bellows, and even where it is blown up into a noisy crackling flame, it burns black and dull for long afterward, when the artificial blast has ceased to play. 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 realizing 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. A quiet Communion with but little sensible fervor is a far deeper thing than a Communion which thrills through us with a pleasant agitation of great thoughts. Tranquility is thrilling also, but it is so in a higher and more supernatural way. The preparation of peace is the best adornment of the heart in which we are to hide the Blessed Sacrament; for the presence of Jesus is itself peace, and works greater things where it finds peace already and has not to lose time by making room for itself and expelling intrusive images.

It is out of peace that love will come, such burning yet such humble love as becomes the worship of the Blessed Sacrament. Our reverence cannot have been right at the first if love does not follow. When fear, and shrinking, and avoidance come to souls with regard to the Blessed Sacrament, it is not so much the want of love to which we must look as the want of reverence. Reverence infallibly provides for love. But the love of the Blessed Sacrament must be a growth of inward peace and spiritual tranquility. 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 a 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. It is better to turn our vexation into self-hatred and self-contempt than to try to create an interior vehemence, which, after all, is a different thing from divine love. 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, or at least interrupt them, 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 or the most glowing heat in our hearts. Perseverance is the real divine heat in our hearts.

But out of love must come familiarity. Yet, as the love itself comes out of reverence, the familiarity must be of a peculiar and noticeable kind. It must have nothing in it of forwardness, of presumption, of carelessness, of indifference, or even of freedom. It implies a spirit accustomed to the divine visitations, and, therefore, not taken unawares by them, nor flurried, nor excited, nor discomposed, nor forgetful of proprieties. Some ecclesiastics are well versed in

the sweet science of the rubrics and ceremonial of the Church, so that, if they are suddenly called upon to take part in some great function, they are not confused or oblivious. They know what to do. They fall into their places naturally. They are parts of a whole, and do not cause disturbance on either side of them by ignorance or precipitation. They are slow and yet ready, calm and yet interested, dignified and yet bashful. Their greatest praise is that they go through the ceremonial in such a natural and unaffected way, that men for the most part do not notice how well they have fulfilled their office, and how completely they are at home in the rubrics of the function. This is an illustration of spiritual familiarity. It 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 honors, 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. Mary was never but once at the deposition from the Cross; and yet with what beautiful familiarity did all her ministries to the Sacred Body take their place, as if they were daily occurrences among the maternal offices of Bethlehem and Nazareth!

Then, last of all, a continual spirit of reparation