

right to offer Him, in which we cannot share. While our spiritual offerings cost us nothing, hers cost her a broken heart. She impoverishd herself to enrich us. Moreover, by offering Jesus to the Father, she did more than all creation put together could do to make reparation to His ever-blessed majesty, which sin had outraged. All angels and all saints must fall no less short than infinitely short of what she did; because her offering was infinite. Consequently it made ample reparation, a reparation worthy of God and equal to God, because what she offered was the Incarnate God, who was likewise her obedient and loving Son. When Mary had made her offering, not a vestige of the outrage of sin remained upon the glory of the Creator. All wound was healed, all void filled up, all darkness illumined, if we may dare to use human words of such a mystery, inadequate as they must necessarily be. Nay, this was not all: by Mary's offering, which was her own, and which she had a right to make, a very world of glory encompassed the throne of God, which He would not have had, perhaps, if sin had never been. Sin became as it were an immensity of new matter, out of which the sacrifice of Jesus and the offering of Mary evoked a fresh world of glory, vaster than all material worlds, for the Majesty of the Most High. Even this is not enough. Mary went into the sacrifice yet deeper. She became a living crucified part of it. Her dolors, next to the dereliction of the Father, were the deepest, the bitterest, and the most extensive part of our Saviour's Passion, and therefore co-operated, with the Divine Abandonment and the sinful cruelty of men,

in enabling Jesus to offer to the Father that magnificent and super-sufficient satisfaction which there was in the sacrifice of the Cross. These were the marvellous effects of her Compassion. We almost tremble to write of them, because we know so well how, through spiritual blindness and want of a truer love of our dearest Mother, we are stating them far below the splendor of their reality.

SECTION IV.

OUR COMPASSION WITH HER COMPASSION.

We have now to speak of our compassion with Mary as an imitation of her Compassion with Jesus, or, in other words, of our compassion with her as itself a worship of Jesus and a true compassion with Him. First of all, devotion to the dolors of our Blessed Lady is most acceptable to our Lord Himself. We quoted in the first chapter His revelation to the Blessed Veronica of Binasco, in which He told her that tears shed over His Mother's sorrows were more precious in His sight than tears shed in memory of His own. We may perhaps venture to explain this as teaching us, what appears to be certainly true in itself, that devotion to the seven dolors brings with it by a kind of necessity devotion to the Passion, whereas devotion to the Passion does not seem so necessarily to include devotion to the dolors. Devotion to the Passion, in which the right place and participation are not assigned to Mary, is not a scriptural devotion; and in many ways, which it would be out of

place to enter upon here, it betokens an imperfect and unworthy view of the Passion itself. Yet it is not uncommon to meet with this partial devotion, and it rather tends to keep devotion to the dolors at arms-length than to lead to it. It is based upon that un-theological mistake, which some deceive themselves into thinking a theological nicety and a controversial felicity, namely, a sort of jealous, ignorant accuracy in keeping Jesus and Mary apart, and not letting one intrude on the sphere of the other, as if to speak as slightingly as they dare of the Mother of God would make truth more attractive in the eyes of a misbelieving world, to which the incredible abasement of Jesus in His Sacrament is already a far greater stumbling-block than the incredible exaltation of His Mother. On the other hand, we see that devotion to the dolors brings with it as its invariable practical result a deep, tender, accurate, minute, and reverential devotion to the Passion. Again, we may venture to read in our Lord's words a loving intent to have reparation made to Mary for her Compassion, just as her Compassion was the grand reparation of His Passion. By inspiring saints and religious orders with this devotion, and sending forth His mighty grace and efficacious blessing to accompany it, He repays her for the beautiful reparation of her Compassion. But whatever other meanings there may be in this revelation to the Blessed Veronica, and although its force as a revelation was, as in all private revelations, intended for herself, it proves at least as much as this, that the devotion to our Lady's dolors is one of peculiar acceptableness in the eyes of our Blessed Saviour.

This devotion has also a remarkable connection with great interior holiness. This is proved by experience. Neither is it to be wondered at. For it is a devotion which naturally makes us unworldly, because we live and breathe in an atmosphere of sorrow. It brings out the unreality of worldly joys. It sobers our thoughts. It keeps them close to Jesus Christ, and to Him crucified. It communicates to our souls the spirit of the Cross; and the enviable gift of love of suffering full often begins in a prayerful familiarity with the sorrows of our Blessed Mother. More than most devotions it tends to supernaturalize the mind, because it keeps us in a sphere of heavenly beauty, whose look and odor gradually pass upon ourselves. It is a sphere in which the most wonderful divine operations mingle with the common woes and sorrows of a suffering world, and so it expresses that union of self-abasement and self-oblivion in which all the greater graces of the spiritual life take root. Moreover, the prevailing ideas to which it weds our minds are just those which are the most solid and essential in any persevering endeavors after holiness. For it unites us to an abiding sorrow for sin, sin which caused Mary's sorrow, sin which caused the sorrow over which Mary sorrowed, sin of our own which was actually present and influential in both those sorrows, wronging at once the Mother and the Son. It equally unites us to the perpetual sense of needing grace, of absolute dependence upon grace, and of that ready abundance of grace on which our filial confidence reposes. It is all stained with the Precious Blood; and thus it puts us into the very depths of our

Saviour's Sacred Heart. There is no soul which worldliness finds it harder to attack than one which is entrenched within the dolors of our Blessed Lady. There is nothing which the world can graft itself upon in that devotion. There is nothing congenial to the spirit and way of the world in it, nothing even which the world can falsify for its own ends or fraudulently divert for its own purposes. Moreover, it was in the dolors that the grandeurs of Mary's sanctity were fabricated, and fabricated out of materials which in their degree are common to every one of us her sons and daughters. It is hard to live in the bosom of great examples and be uninfluenced by them. The lessons which the dolors teach us are wanted at almost every turn of life, and are most appropriate to the very seasons when grace is wont to be most active in us; and they are imparted with such loving tenderness, with such pathetic simplicity, and in the midst of such countless similitudes between our sinless Mother and our sinful selves, that it is difficult to conceive of a school in which so much heavenly wisdom is taught so winningly as in the Compassion of Mary.

Furthermore, this devotion to the dolors of Mary is reckoned by theologians among the signs of predestination. Certainly a special attraction of grace is a sweet prophecy of our final perseverance; and it is by a special attraction of grace that we addict ourselves to this devotion. Perhaps our Lord's revelation to St John the Evangelist, cited in the first chapter, of the four graces which it was His blessed will to attach to this devotion, one of which concerned the gift of perfect contrition before death, and another our Lady's

protection in the hour of death, may have led to its being included in the catalogue of signs of predestination. For sorrow for sin is well-nigh the queen of graces, enclosing as it does within itself the grace and more than the grace of sacraments. Contrition is nearest of kin to perseverance, and the promise of our Lady's assistance at the hour of death is not far removed from an assurance of our salvation. Cartagena says,* "A man may put before himself, as the most assured sign of predestination, the fact that he has had compassion for this most afflicted Mother; for the ancients tell us that it was conceded to the Blessed Virgin by Christ the Lord, that whoever should revolve in his mind her maternal dolors might be sure of impetrating any favor which concerned the salvation of his soul, and especially the grace of true penance for his sins before death."

Thus also devotion to the dolors is one of the best preparations for death, not only because of the precise graces promised to it in the hour of death, but also because it concerns our Lady's ministry to our Lord at the hour of His blessed death. Hence there is a congruity between this devotion and death. And, after all, what should life be but a preparation for death? And what graces should more attract our humility than those which promise us their succor in that tremendous hour? Alas! it is not for such as we are to look forward to death with triumph, or even with impatience. We are not saints. Triumph therefore would be unseemly in us, and impatience is surely premature. It is enough for us, in our low attain-

* Ap Sinischaleh. xvi.

ments, to be content to die, and to fear bravely that which we are contented to endure. Fine words are easy, and love is very profuse of them, when we are not tempted, and when God is flooding us with that inward sweetness which gives us such a facility in prayer. But when we are tempted, we grow silent; and when to our temptation is added spiritual dryness, querulousness and peevishness are added to our silence. We are soon prostrated; and we learn thereby the good lesson of our own real inward misery and helplessness. But if dryness and temptation bring such changes, what will death bring? It will bring such an unutterable, speechless, terrified, agonizing necessity of grace as it is appalling to think of when we bend our thoughts seriously to it. What will a devotion be worth to us, then, which has two special deathbed promises attached to it! Gold and pearls could not reckon its price. But the devotion must have been a lifetime devotion in order legally to inherit the deathbed promises.

It is unnecessary to speak of the authority of the Church, of the liberality of her indulgences, of the examples of the saints, or of the records of numberless conversions, all attesting the power and acceptableness of this devotion. They have already occupied our attention in the first chapter. But we must not forget that our Blessed Lady has a special claim upon our devotion to her dolours. It is part of the duty of sons to their mother to compassionate her in her trials and sorrows, of whatever nature they may be, or from whatever cause they may spring. But this is very far short of our duty toward the sorrows of Mary. We

ourselves were part of them. We were the causes of her suffering. It was not only for our good that she suffered, but it was by our evil that she suffered. Hence there is no devotion to her to which we are so bound as to her dolours. There is no expression of our love more fitting, and indeed more imperative upon us, than compassion with her Compassion. It is the most inclusive of all devotions to her. It comprehends the greatest number of her mysteries. It keeps closest to her when she is in the closest union with Jesus. It goes deepest down into her immaculate heart. It throws the strongest light on the summits of her Divine Maternity, and at the same time it is the special devotion of her Motherhood of us. It best satisfies our obligations to her, while it is most vividly kindling our love. It at once befits the necessities of our lowliness and the splendors of her magnificence.

Let us add to its perfection as a devotion to Mary its perfection also as a devotion to Jesus, and the picture is complete. The highest devotion to our Blessed Lord is to possess ourselves of His spirit, to appreciate it, to welcome it, to feel in it, to act in it, to suffer in it. The more we can do and suffer all things in union with Him, the more excellently are we His disciples. We have to become Christians. It is the business of grace to multiply all over the world copies and likenesses of the Incarnate Word. Union with Jesus is the shortest definition of holiness, and one which is equally applicable to all its numberless varieties. Now, Mary is our model of this. The special grace of all devotions to Mary is union with Jesus.

This is what they all teach. They not only teach it as a lesson, but they are the vehicle by which it is conveyed into our souls as a real predominant spirit, a substantial transforming grace. She is inseparable from Jesus. Her spirit is the greatest possible communication of His. He is her meaning, her significance, her motive, her aim, her life. The action of Jesus and Mary is as nearly one action as a twofold action can be one. Jesus is our model; but we must copy Him as Mary copied Him. It is her office to teach us this, to be our model of imitation. We must do all things in union with Mary, and then shall we best do them all in union with Jesus. But devotion to her dolours leads us most directly, most speedily, and most universally, to do all things in union with her. For her sorrows were lifelong; they were the most constant of all her dispositions; they were the dispositions in which she was the most closely united with Jesus, and followed Him with the most minute and changeable fidelity through the mysteries of the Three-and-Thirty Years. Thus it comes to pass that devotion to her dolours leads us most directly, most speedily, and most universally to do all things in union with Jesus; and, therefore, it is the highest devotion to Him, the perfection of devotion to Jesus, as well as the perfection of devotion to Mary. Thus our compassion with Mary partakes of the beauty, power, and blessing of her Compassion with Jesus, and is part of hers, as by hers it is won to Jesus, and by hers closed in His loving embrace, with the tenderest union of which we are capable, with our unspeakably tender and loving Lord.

SECTION V.

THE PASSION AND COMPASSION COMPARED.

Our fifth point was to compare the Compassion and the Passion together. But a great deal of this has already been done by implication in the course of the preceding inquiries. The first point of similitude is in its interior character. The mental sufferings of the Passion went far beyond its bodily tortures, not merely because anguish of heart is worse to bear than pain of body, but also because they were of a far more awful description, and because they were of longer duration. The inward agony, by which the shame and guilt of sin were expiated, was far more terrific than the blows, and wounds, and diversified atrocities which the cruelty of sinners could inflict upon the Body of Jesus. His inward pains were more numerous, more various, more vehement, burned deeper, and lasted longer. The abandonment of the Father and the weight of His angry justice were, of course, the most intolerable sufferings of the Passion, and both those were interior. Next to them we must rank the sorrows of Mary, and they chiefly affected Him inwardly. Sin, the third of His executioners, tortured His soul more than His Body. Thus, though our attention is naturally most drawn to His outward Passion, we shall never rightly conceive even of that, unless we remember that by far the greater portion of His Passion was interior. The visible Passion was but the tossing surface of an invisible deep. Mary's Compas-

sion also was interior, in her heart as well as His. It was drawn, too, from the same afflictive sources. It had passed through His Heart before it entered into hers. At the same time, there is certainly a contrast, in this respect, as well as a similitude. For she had no outward Passion to correspond with His. Her interior agony was not, of course, without aching exhaustion of the frame, bitterest smarting and crushing of the fleshly heart, and intolerable burning of the brain. Her body suffered as well as her soul. It had to hold fire, and the fire burned it through and through. Nevertheless, there was nothing at all to answer to the outward Passion of our Blessed Lord. Her outward Passion was the fifteen years of wearisome, suffering delay which was her lot when He had ascended into heaven.

The Passion and the Compassion may also be compared together, in that each was the cause of the other. Both were causes, and both were effects. It was our Lord's Passion which filled our Lady's heart to the brim with bitterness; and it was our Lady's Compassion which was one of the main ingredients in our Saviour's Passion. Only our Lady's Compassion was not coextensive with the Passion as its cause, while it was coextensive with it as an effect, because it took it all in, embraced it, assimilated it to itself, and made it utterly its own. The contents of our Lady's heart could not fill our Lord's, but hers could hold the contents of His. The Mother crucified the Son, and the Son, crucified as He was, went and placed Himself with all the implements of His Passion in His Mother's heart, making it large enough by

breaking it. It was not only that each pain of the Passion was represented in her Compassion. It is most likely that she really felt it all, just as it was, not in all its intolerable reality, but in such dread reality at least as was according to the measure of her immense capabilities of suffering. The saints have felt it so, in their lesser measure, great in our eyes as that lesser measure was. They have been invisibly stigmatized, and they have been led in horrible inward unimaginable tortures through all the mysteries of the Passion, miraculous power often being needed to prevent the separation of body and soul. Can we imagine that this inward real compassion was granted to them, and that she was without it? It is also another similitude between the Compassion and the Passion, that just as saints have been allowed in mystical ways to feel the sufferings of our Blessed Lord, so have they also been allowed mystically to participate in the sorrows of Mary. Both the Compassion and the Passion have been recognized fountains out of which have flowed some of the most singular and at the same time the best-accredited phenomena of mystical theology.

SECTION VI.

THE SEEMING EXCESS OF THE COMPASSION.

But there is another point in the resemblance between the Passion of Jesus and the Compassion of Mary, which must not be omitted. It is the seeming excess of her sorrows over his. We call it *seeming*, because no