

MEDITATIONS & READINGS

ST. ALPHONSUS

VOLUME IV – PART I
AFTER PENTECOST
XI TO XVIII SUNDAY

Edited by Rev. J. B. Coyle, C.S.S.R.

VISITS TO THE MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT and TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, with Prayers for Mass, Preparation for Communion, Thanksgiving, etc. By ST. ALPHONSUS.

PRAYER. By ST. ALPHONSUS. Jubilee Edition.

OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL SUCCOUR AND IRELAND. (ἡ ἁγία ἑπιφανεία τῆς Ἐκκλησίας). S. U. C., O'Connell's.

Meditations and Readings

FOR
EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

Selected from the Spiritual Writings of
SAINT ALPHONSUS

*Doctor of the Church and Founder of the Congregation
of the Most Holy Redeemer*

VOLUME FOUR
PART I.

FOREWORD

BY

HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF CASHEL

Edited by

JOHN BAPT. COYLE, C.S.S.R.



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MEDITATIONS & READINGS
FOR EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR

VOLUME IV.—PART I.
AFTER PENTECOST
(XI. TO XVIII. SUNDAY)

Permissu Superioris:

PATRICK MURRAY, C.S.S.R.

Superioris Generalis et Rectoris Majoris.

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FOREWORD

BY HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF CASHEL

I WELCOME with special pleasure "MEDITATIONS AND READINGS FOR EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR." These beautiful volumes provide the clergy and laity with salutary illustrations and inspirations. Immersed in affairs of the world we are in danger of forgetting the things that really matter. The lure of excessive amusement and the attractions of morbid literature create an unhealthy atmosphere. Our minds are turned away from heavenly thoughts and are coloured by the evil influences that surround us. In these "MEDITATIONS AND READINGS" we have the means of filling our minds with holy thoughts and our wills with fruitful resolutions that will enable us to live in a world of supernatural ideals.

The "MEDITATIONS AND READINGS" are selected from the spiritual writings of St. Alphonsus, Doctor of the Church, and Founder of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. In St. Alphonsus we have a guide whose spiritual outlook on life, wonderful gift of sane advice, and unquestioned supremacy in the sacred science are a guarantee of religious perfection. His writings have been models of spiritual instruction and have won many souls to the life of grace. Their publication in new form deserves high praise.

The "MEDITATIONS AND READINGS" are edited by Fr. Coyle, C.S.S.R., whose experience as a missionary has given him an insight into the needs of the day, and whose experience as an editor has fitted him for the

loving task of publishing the Works of the great Founder of his great Congregation.

I bless Fr. Coyle and his work. I hope that his "MEDITATIONS AND READINGS" will be widely known and properly appreciated. We are indebted to him for volumes that cannot fail to help us in the important and difficult task of saving our souls.

✠ J. M. HARTY.
Archbishop of Cashel.

*Feast of the Blessed Oliver Plunket,
11th July, 1930.*

LETTER FROM HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL LOGUE
TO THE EDITOR.

ARA COELL,
ARMAGH,
16th March, 1924.

MY DEAR FATHER COYLE,

I have put off writing to thank you for your interesting and edifying volume, *Meditations and Readings for Every Day of the Year*, till I should find time to look through it. I have done so now, and I can congratulate you on undertaking a very useful work; and I hope you will be spared till you complete it.

The Ascetic Works of St. Alphonsus have done wonders in conveying solid instruction, nourishing piety, and exciting fervour among the people in every state and stage of life. They have been an ever enduring source of piety, especially in inspiring love of our Holy Redeemer and tender devotion to His Blessed Mother. It is a question whether his great Theological Works have contributed more to the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Hence it was not without regret I noticed that these Spiritual Works were not so common among the people as they were in my early days. They seemed to be giving place to more showy and more superficial modern works which are far from breathing the fervent spirit of the great Doctor and Saint. One of the chief fruits which I expect from the work you have undertaken is the redress of this serious spiritual loss.

You have commenced well, and I trust you will be

able to continue till the Spiritual Works of St. Alphonsus are again as extensively circulated among the people as they were in the past. The scheme you have sketched out for yourself will familiarize the people with the beauty and fervour of St. Alphonsus' Works, and from using your volumes for casual reading they will be likely to drink more deeply of the source of fervour the Saint has opened up to them.

Wishing you every blessing and success in your useful work,

I am,

Dear Father Coyle,

Yours gratefully,

✠ MICHAEL CARDINAL LOGUE.

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL O'DONNELL wrote :

It is a pleasure to me to subscribe my name to the beautiful letter written by my lamented predecessor, his Eminence Cardinal Logue, to commend Father Coyle's publications from the Spiritual Works of St. Alphonsus Liguori.

✠ PATRICK CARDINAL O'DONNELL,
Archbishop of Armagh.

Armagh, 20th February, 1926.
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*AS FOREWORD TO VOLUME III. PART II.
HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF TUAM*

wrote :—

As a boy I read with great profit the popular spiritual works of St. Alphonsus Liguori. I am delighted to know that Fr. Coyle is having them republished in an enlarged edition and in the new form of "Meditations and Readings for Every Day of the Year."

I do not know of any religious books at once so sane, so spiritual and so adapted to the intelligence of the ordinary reader. They go straight to the root of normal spirituality. They are commonsense founded on the Truths of Faith. Such books were never so much needed as at the present day. We are living in an age of secularism. Never before did life offer so many attractions to divert the mind from the consideration of the Eternal Truths. Never before was there such an output of purely secular books, magazines, and newspapers, so smoothly written and so beautifully illustrated that the temptation to read them is universal and almost irresistible. Some of them are mere covers for sensuality, and others are hostile to the Faith, and all have a demoralising influence on the mind. To counteract the resulting influence we want a corresponding output of wholesome Catholic literature, including books that advertise the attractions of the spiritual life. We want books that will bring home to our youth that there is no happiness comparable to the humble joy of the good

Christian. We want books that will, with flashes from the Beyond, dissipate the spell that the prospect of sensual pleasure casts over the imagination of youth. We want books, too, that will terrorise the hardened sinner and confirm the struggling aspirant to the higher life in the grim determination to walk in the narrow way. Now such are the ascetic works of St. Liguori that Father Coyle is engaged in having re-published. From my heart I wish him success in this apostolic mission. From my heart I pray that these volumes may have a wide circulation.

It is recognised that St. Liguori was one of the greatest missionaries of all time. He was himself a great preacher of the Gospel. He founded the Congregation of the Redemptorists who have been in the thick of the fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil for well-nigh two hundred years, and who are only growing more vigorous with time. The Saint was a classical writer of Moral Theology. And while his Moral Theology holds the scales evenly between laxity and rigorism, his spiritual writings hold the scales between sentimental piety and cold ascetical teaching, with a like evenness, which attracts and converts the sinner, encourages the weak, and confirms the strong.

✠ T. P. GILMARTIN,
Archbishop of Tuam.

ST. JARLATH'S,
28th April, 1929.

*LETTER OF APPROBATION AND BLESSING FROM
MOST REV. PATRICK MURRAY, C.S.S.R.,
Superior-General and Rector Major*

J.M.J.A.T. SANT' ALFONSO—VIA MERULANA,
ROMA,
23rd October, 1923.

MY DEAR FATHER COYLE,

I am very glad to hear that you have the first part of your "Meditations and Readings for every Day of the Year from the Writings of St. Alphonsus" ready for publication, and I wish this and the succeeding Volumes every success. It is difficult to exaggerate the value of these "Meditations and Readings" as is seen from the following statements of two Popes :

His Holiness Pope Pius IX, in speaking of the writings of St. Alphonsus, wrote : "The works of this most holy and learned man, written with extraordinary tender piety and devotion, breathe in every page a great love for Jesus Christ and great confidence in His mercy and merits. They also inspire their readers with the most ardent devotion to the Virgin Mother of God and to the Saints, and they inflame the hearts of men with the desire of receiving the Sacraments, as well as furnish a most abundant supply of excellent admonitions, counsels and directions to those who labour for the salvation of souls."

Pope Benedict XV also wrote recently, on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Doctorate of St. Alphonsus, that the excellence and utility of his teaching are becoming every day more apparent, and that his writings are helpful, not only to Theologians and Professors of the

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Sacred Sciences, but also to the faithful of every condition of life, to whom he points out the way to solid virtue, and smooths for them the way to the highest Christian perfection. His Holiness adds that the Saint's one great ambition in all his writings was to make known to all men the infinite amiability of Jesus Christ.

It is unnecessary for me to add anything to these words of two Popes. I wish only to say that this infinite amiability of Jesus Christ is particularly well shown in the present volume, for, in addition to the Meditations and Readings on the Religious State and on other subjects, there are given about forty Meditations on the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, in which are contained some of the most beautiful and devotional pages written by the Saint. Moreover the division of the ascetic writings of the Saint into two Meditations and a Spiritual Reading for every day of the year, and this arranged in such a way as not to interrupt the sequence of any work of the Saint, will please many, both in the Cloister and in the world, who desire to know and follow in their spiritual life the teachings of this great Doctor of the Church and Director of Souls.

In conclusion, in the name of St. Alphonsus I bless you and these Meditations and Readings with the hope that they may be everywhere known and read and well thought on, so that all may know the infinite amiability and mercy of Jesus Christ and the unspeakable amiability and mercy of His Blessed Mother, and that they may thus seek and love and serve Them alone.

Your devoted servant and confrère,
PATRICK MURRAY, C.S.S.R.,
Sup. Gen. and Rector Major.

REV. J. B. COYLE, C.S.S.R.,
ST. JOSEPH'S,
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MEDITATIONS AND READINGS

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

I.—THE PASSING OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN OUT OF THIS WORLD.

Let us consider how holy Mary passed from this world by a sweet and happy death. Three things render death bitter—attachment to the world, remorse for sins, and the uncertainty of salvation. Mary died as she had lived, entirely detached from the things of the world; she died in the most perfect peace; she died in the certainty of eternal glory.

I.

Death being the punishment of sin, it would seem that the Divine Mother—all holy, and exempt as she was from its slightest stain—should also have been exempt from death, and from encountering the misfortunes to which the children of Adam, infected by the poison of sin, are subject. But God was pleased that Mary should in all things resemble Jesus; and as the Son died, it was becoming that the Mother should also die; because, moreover, He wished to give the just an example of the precious death prepared for them, He willed that even

* A Novena of Meditations and Readings for the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary begins here.
(1785)

the most Blessed Virgin should die, but by a sweet and happy death. Let us, therefore, consider how precious was Mary's death, on account of the special favours by which it was accompanied.

There are three things that render death bitter : attachment to the world, remorse for sins, and the uncertainty of salvation. The death of Mary was entirely free from these causes of bitterness, and was accompanied by three special graces, which rendered it precious and joyful. She died as she had lived, entirely detached from the things of the world ; she died in the most perfect peace ; she died in the certainty of eternal glory.

There can be no doubt that attachment to earthly things renders the death of the worldly bitter and miserable, as the Holy Ghost says : *O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions!*—(Eccelus. xli. 1). But because the Saints die detached from the things of the world, their death is not bitter, but sweet, lovely, and precious ; that is to say, as St. Bernard remarks, worth purchasing at any price, however great. *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord*—(Apoc. xiv. 13). Who are they who, being already dead, die? They are those happy souls who pass into eternity already detached, and, so to say, dead to all affection for terrestrial things ; and who, like St. Francis of Assisi, find in God alone all their happiness, and with him can say : " My God and my All ! "

II.

What soul was ever more detached from earthly goods, and more united to God, than the beautiful soul of Mary? She was detached from her parents, for at the age of three years, when children are most attached to them, and stand in the greatest need of their assistance, Mary, with the greatest intrepidity, left them, and went to shut herself up in the Temple to attend to God alone. She was detached from riches, contenting herself always to live poor, and supporting herself with the labour of her own hands. She was detached from honours, loving

an humble and abject life, though the honours due to a queen were hers, as she was descended from the kings of Israel. The Blessed Virgin herself revealed to St. Elizabeth of Hungary that when her parents left her in the temple, she resolved in her heart to have no father, and to love no other good than God.

St. John saw Mary represented in that woman, clothed with the sun, who held the moon under her feet. *And a great sign appeared in heaven : a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet*—(Apoc. xii. 1). Interpreters explain the moon to signify the goods of this world, which, like the moon, are uncertain and changeable. Mary never had these goods in her heart, but always despised them and trampled them under her feet ; living in this world as a solitary turtle-dove in a desert, never allowing her affection to centre itself on any earthly thing ; so that of her it was said : *The voice of the turtle is heard in our land*—(Cant. ii. 12). And elsewhere : *Who is she that goeth up by the desert?*—(Cant. iii. 6). Whence the Abbot Rupert says " Thus didst thou go up by the desert ; that is, having a solitary soul." Mary, then, having lived always and in all things detached from the earth, and united to God alone, death was not bitter, but, on the contrary, very sweet and dear to her ; since it united her more closely to God in Heaven, by an eternal bond.

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE CRY, POOR BANISHED CHILDREN OF EVE.

I.—THE PROMPTITUDE OF MARY IN ASSISTING THOSE WHO INVOKE HER.

Truly unfortunate are we poor children of Eve ; for, guilty before God of her fault, and condemned to the same penalty, we have to wander about in this valley of

tears as exiles from our country, and to weep over our many afflictions of body and soul. But blessed is he who, in the midst of these sorrows, often turns to the comfortress of the world, to the refuge of the unfortunate, to the great Mother of God, and devoutly calls upon her and invokes her! *Blessed is the man that heareth me, and that watcheth daily at my gates*—(Prov. viii. 34). Blessed, says Mary, is he who listens to my counsels, and watches continually at the gate of my mercy, and invokes my intercession and aid.

The holy Church carefully teaches us her children with what attention and confidence we should unceasingly have recourse to this loving protectress; and for this purpose commands a worship peculiar to Mary. And not only this, but she has instituted many Festivals that are celebrated throughout the year in honour of this great Queen: she devotes one day in the week, in an especial manner, to her honour: in the Divine Office all Ecclesiastics and Religious are daily obliged to invoke her in the name of all Christians; and, finally, she desires that all the faithful should salute this most holy Mother of God three times a day, at the sound of the Angelus-bell. And that we may understand the confidence that the holy Church has in Mary we need only remember that in all public calamities she invariably invites all to have recourse to the protection of this Divine Mother, by novenas, prayers, processions, by visiting the churches dedicated to her honour, and her images. And this is what Mary desires. She wishes us always to seek her and invoke her aid; not as if she were begging of us these honours and marks of veneration, for they are in no way proportioned to her merit; but she desires them, that by such means our confidence and devotion may be increased, and that so she may be able to give us greater succour and comfort. "She seeks for those," says St. Bonaventure, "who approach her devoutly and with reverence, for such she loves, nourishes, and adopts as her children."

The Saint remarks that Ruth, whose name signifies, "seeing and hastening," was a figure of Mary; "for

Mary, seeing our miseries, hastens in her mercy to succour us." Novarino adds that "Mary, in the greatness of her desire to help us, cannot admit of delay, for she is in no way an avaricious guardian of the graces she has at her disposal as Mother of Mercy, and cannot do otherwise than immediately shower down the treasures of her liberality on her servants."

Oh, how prompt is this good Mother to help those who call upon her! *Thy two breasts, says the sacred Canticle, are like two roses that are twins*—(Cant. iv. 5). Richard of St. Laurence explains this verse, and says, that as roses are swift in their course, so are the breasts of Mary prompt to bestow the milk of mercy on all who ask it. "By the light pressure of a devout salutation and prayer they distil large drops." The same author assures us that the compassion of Mary is poured out on every one who asks it, even should it be sought for by no other prayer than a simple "Hail Mary." Wherefore Novarino declares that the Blessed Virgin not only runs but flies to assist him who invokes her. "She," says this author, "in the exercise of her mercy, knows not how to act differently from God; for, as He flies at once to the assistance of those who beg His aid, faithful to His promise, *Asit, and you shall receive*—(John xvi. 24), so Mary, whenever she is invoked, is at once ready to assist him who prays to her. "God has wings when He assists His own, and immediately flies to them; Mary also takes wing when she is about to fly to our aid." And hence we see who the woman was, spoken of in the following verse of the Apocalypse, to whom two great eagle's wings were given, that she might fly to the desert. *And there were given to the woman two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the desert*—(Apoc. xii. 14). Ribeira explains these wings to mean the love with which Mary always flew to God. "She has the wings of an eagle, for she flies with the love of God." But the Blessed Amadeus, more to our purpose, remarks that these wings of an eagle signify "the velocity, exceeding that of the seraphim, with which Mary always flies to the succour of her children."

This will explain a passage in the Gospel of St. Luke, in which we are told that when Mary went to visit and shower graces on St. Elizabeth and her whole family, she was not slow, but went with speed. The Gospel says: *And Mary, rising up, went into the hill country with haste*—(Luke i. 39). And this is not said of her return. For a similar reason, we are told in the sacred Canticles that *her hands are skilful at the wheel*—(Cant. v. 14), meaning, says Richard of St. Laurence, “that as the art of turning is the easiest and most expeditious mode of working, so also is Mary the most willing and prompt of all the Saints to assist her clients.” And truly “she has the most ardent desire to console all, and is no sooner invoked than accepts our prayers and helps us,” St. Bonaventure, then, was right in calling Mary the “salvation of all who call upon her,” meaning, that it suffices to invoke this Divine Mother in order to be saved; for, according to Richard of St. Laurence, she is always ready to help those who seek her aid. “Thou wilt always find her ready to help thee.” And Bernardine de Bustis adds that “this great lady is more desirous to grant us graces than we are desirous to receive them.”

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

The Prophet David predicted many circumstances, and in great detail, respecting the Passion of Jesus Christ. Especially in the twenty-first Psalm he foretold that Jesus would be pierced with nails in His hands and in His feet, and that they would be able to count all His bones. He foretold that before He should be crucified, His garments would be stripped from Him and divided

among the executioners. He spoke of His outer garments, because the inner vestment, which was made without seam, was to be given by lot: *They parted my garments amongst them, and upon my vesture they cast lots*—(Ps. xxi. 19). This Prophecy is recalled both by St. Matthew and St. John—(Matt. xxvii. 35; Jo. xix. 23).

David also foretold what St. Matthew relates respecting the blasphemies and mockeries of the Jews against Jesus Christ while He hung upon the Cross: *They that passed by blasphemed him, wagging their heads and saying, Vah, thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it, save thy own self; if thou be the son of God, come down from the cross. In like manner also, the chief priests, with the scribes and ancients, mocking, said: He saved others, himself he cannot save; if he be the king of Israel, let him come now down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God, let him now deliver him if he will have him; for he said: I am the Son of God*—(Matt. xxvii. 39-43). All this was in accordance with what David had foretold: *All they that saw me have laughed me to scorn; they have spoken with the lips and wagged the head. He hoped in the Lord, let him deliver him, let him save him seeing he delighteth in him*—(Ps. xxi. 8, 9).

II.

The Royal Prophet further foretold the great pains Jesus would suffer on the Cross in seeing Himself abandoned by all, and even by His own, except St. John and the Blessed Virgin; while His beloved Mother, by her presence, would not lessen the sufferings of her Son, but rather increased them through the compassion He felt for her, in seeing her thus afflicted by His death. Thus our suffering Lord, in the agonies of His bitter death, had none to comfort Him. This also was foretold by David: *I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none; and for one that would comfort me, and I found none*—(Ps. lxxviii. 21). The greatest

suffering, however, of our afflicted Redeemer consisted in His beholding Himself abandoned by His Eternal Father, upon which He cried out, according to the prophecy of David : *O God, my God, look upon me; why hast thou forsaken me? Far from my salvation are the words of my sins*—(Ps. xxi. 2), as though He had said, “O my Father, the sins of men, which I call My own, because I have taken them upon Me, forbid Me to be delivered from these sufferings which are ending My life; and why hast Thou, O My God, abandoned Me in this My great agony?” To these words of David correspond the words which St. Matthew records as uttered by Jesus upon the Cross a little while before His death : *Eli, Eli, lamma sabachthani? that is : My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*—(Matt. xxvii. 46).

Monday—Eleventh Week after Pentecost

Morning Meditation

II.—THE PASSING OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN
OUT OF THIS WORLD.

Peace of mind renders the death of the just precious. Sins committed during life are the worms that so cruelly torment and gnaw at the hearts of poor dying sinners. But holy Mary could not be tormented at death by any remorse for she was always pure, and free from the least stain of sin. *Thou art fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee.*

I.

Peace of mind renders the death of the just precious. Sins committed during life are the worms that so cruelly torment and gnaw the hearts of poor dying sinners, who, about to appear before the Divine tribunal, see themselves at that moment surrounded by their sins, which terrify them, and cry out, according to St. Bernard : “We are thy works; we will not abandon thee !” Mary certainly could not be tormented at death by any remorse of conscience, for she was always pure, and always free from the least shade of actual or original sin ; so much so, that of her it was said : *Thou art all fair, O my love, and there is not a spot in thee*—(Cant. iv. 7). From the moment that she had the use of reason, that is, from the first moment of her Immaculate Conception in the womb of St. Anne, she began to love God with all her strength, and continued to do so, always advancing more and more throughout her whole life in love and perfection. And all her thoughts, desires, and affections were of and for God alone ; she never uttered a word, made a movement, cast a glance, or breathed, but for God and His glory ; and never departed a step or detached herself for a single moment from Divine love. Ah, how did all the lovely virtues that she had practised during life surround her blessed bed in the happy hour of her death ! That Faith so constant ; that loving confidence in God ; that unconquerable patience in the midst of so many sufferings ; that humility in the midst of so many privileges ; that modesty ; that meekness ; that tender compassion for souls ; that insatiable zeal for the glory of God ; and, above all, that most perfect love towards Him, with that entire conformity to the Divine will : all, in a word, surrounded her, and consoling her, said : “We are thy works ; we will not abandon thee !” Our Lady and Mother, we are all daughters of thy beautiful heart ; now that thou art leaving this miserable life, we will not leave thee ; we also will go, and be thy eternal accompaniment and honour in Paradise, where, by our means, thou wilt reign as Queen of all men and of all Angels.

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II.

The certainty of eternal salvation renders death sweet. Death is called a passage; for by death we pass from a short to an eternal life. And as the dread of those is indeed great who die in doubt of their salvation, and who approach the solemn moment with well-grounded fear of passing into eternal death; thus, on the other hand, the joy of the Saints is indeed great at the close of life, hoping with some security to go and possess God in Heaven. A nun of the Order of St. Teresa, when the doctor announced to her her approaching death, was so filled with joy that she exclaimed: "Oh, how is it, sir, that you announce to me such welcome news, and demand no fee?" St. Laurence Justinian, being at the point of death, and perceiving his servants weeping round him, said: "Away, away with your tears; this is no time to mourn." Go elsewhere to weep; if you would remain with me, rejoice, as I rejoice, in seeing the gates of Heaven open to me, that I may be united to my God. Thus also a St. Peter of Alcantara, a St. Aloysius Gonzaga, and so many other Saints, on hearing that death was at hand, burst forth into exclamations of joy and gladness. And yet they were not certain of being in possession of Divine grace, nor were they secure of their own sanctity, as Mary was.

But what joy must the Divine Mother have felt in receiving the news of her approaching death—she who had the fullest certainty of the possession of Divine grace, especially after the Angel Gabriel had assured her that she was full of grace, and that she already possessed God. *Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee!* And well did she herself know that her heart was continually burning with Divine love; so that, as Bernardine de Bustis says, "Mary, by a singular privilege granted to no other Saint, loved, and was always actually loving God, in every moment of her life, with such ardour, that St. Bernard declares it required a continued miracle to preserve her life in the midst of such flames."

Of Mary it had already been asked in the Sacred Can-

ticles: *Who is she that goeth up by the desert, as a pillar of smoke, of aromatical spices, of myrrh, and frankincense, and all the powders of the perfumer?*—(Cant. iii. 6). Her entire mortification typified by the myrrh, her fervent prayers signified by the incense, and all her holy virtues united to her perfect love for God, kindled in her a flame so great that her beautiful soul, wholly devoted to and consumed by Divine love, arose continually to God as a pillar of smoke, breathing forth on every side a most sweet odour. As the loving Virgin lived, so did she die. As Divine love gave her life, so did it cause her death; for the Doctors and holy Fathers of the Church generally say she died of no other infirmity than pure love; St. Ildephonsus says that Mary either ought not to die, or only die of love.

Spiritual Reading

TO THEE DO WE CRY, POOR BANISHED CHILDREN OF EVE.

2.—THE PROMPTITUDE OF MARY IN ASSISTING THOSE WHO INVOKE HER.

The multitude of our sins should not diminish our confidence that Mary will grant our petitions when we cast ourselves at her feet. She is the Mother of Mercy; but mercy would not be needed did none exist who require it. On this subject Richard of St. Laurence remarks, "that as a good mother does not shrink from applying a remedy to her child infected with ulcers, however nauseous and revolting they may be, so also is our good Mother unable to abandon us when we have recourse to her, that she may heal the wounds caused by our sins, however loathsome they may have rendered us." This is exactly what Mary gave St. Gertrude to understand, when she showed herself to her with her

mantle spread out to receive all who have recourse to her. At the same time the Saint was told that "Angels constantly guard the clients of this Blessed Virgin from the assaults of hell."

This good Mother's compassion is so great, and the love she bears us is such, that she does not even wait for our prayers in order to assist us; but, as it is expressed in the Book of Wisdom: *she preventeth them that covet her, so that she first showeth herself unto them*—(Wisd. vi. 14). St. Anselm applies these words to Mary, and says that she is beforehand with those who desire her protection. By this we are to understand that she obtains us many favours from God before we have recourse to her. For this reason Richard of St. Victor remarks that she is called the moon, *fair as the moon*—(Cant. vi. 9), meaning, not only that she is swift as the moon in its course, by flying to the aid of those who invoke her, but that she is still more so, for her love for us is so tender that in our wants she anticipates our prayers, and her mercy is more prompt to help us than we are to ask her aid. "And this arises," adds the same Richard, "from the fact that the heart of Mary is so filled with compassion for poor sinners, that she no sooner sees our miseries than she pours her tender mercies upon us. Nor is it possible for this benign Queen to behold the want of any soul without immediately assisting it."

Mary, even when living in this world, showed at the marriage-feast of Cana the great compassion that she would afterwards exercise towards us in our necessities, and which now, as it were, forces her to have pity on us and assist us, even before we ask her to do so. In the Second Chapter of St. Luke we read that at this Feast the compassionate Mother saw the embarrassment in which the bride and bridegroom were, and that they were quite ashamed on seeing the wine fail; and therefore, without being asked, and listening only to the dictates of her compassionate heart, which could never behold the afflictions of others without feeling for them, she begged her Son to console them. This she did by

laying their distress before Him: *they have no wine*—(Jo. ii. 3). No sooner had she done so than our Lord, in order to satisfy all present, and still more to console the compassionate heart of His Mother, who had asked the favour, worked the well-known miracle by which He changed the water, brought to Him in jars, into wine. From this Novarinus argues that "if Mary, unasked, is thus prompt to succour the needy, how much more so will she be to succour those who invoke her and ask for her help?"

Should there be any one who doubts as to whether Mary will aid him if he has recourse to her, Innocent III thus reproves him: "Who is there that ever, when in the night of sin, had recourse to this sweet Lady without being relieved?"

"Who ever," exclaims the Blessed Eutychian, "faithfully implored thy all-powerful aid and was abandoned by thee?" Indeed, no one for thou, Mary, canst relieve the most wretched and save the most abandoned. Such a case certainly never did and never will occur.

"I am satisfied," says St. Bernard, "that whoever has had recourse to thee, O Blessed Virgin, in his wants, and can remember that he did so in vain, should no more speak of or praise thy mercy."

"Sooner," says the devout Blossius, "would Heaven and earth be destroyed than would Mary fail to assist any one who asks for her help, provided he does so with a good intention and with confidence in her,"

Evening Meditation

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

I.

It is clear how unjustly the Jews refused to recognise Jesus as the true Messiah because He died so shameful a

death. They do not perceive that if, instead of dying as a malefactor upon the Cross, Jesus Christ had died a death accounted honourable and glorious by men, He would not have been that Messias Who was promised by God and predicted by the Prophets, who, so many ages before, had foretold that our Redeemer should die loaded with insults : *He shall give his cheek to the smiter, he shall be overwhelmed with insults*—(Lam. iii. 30). All these humiliations, and all the sufferings of Jesus Christ, already foretold by the Prophets, were not understood even by His disciples until after His Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven : *These things his disciples did not understand at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of him*—(Jo. xii. 16).

In a word, by the Passion of Jesus Christ, which was accompanied by so great sufferings and so great ignominy, that which David wrote was fulfilled : *Justice and peace have kissed*—(Ps. lxxxiv. 11). They kissed each other, because, by the merits of Jesus Christ, men obtained peace with God, while, at the same time, the Divine justice was more than abundantly satisfied by the death of the Redeemer. We say, *more than abundantly*, because to save us, it was not actually necessary that Jesus Christ should endure so many sufferings and insults. One single drop of Blood, one single prayer, would have been sufficient to save the whole world; while, in order to strengthen our hopes, and to inflame our love, Jesus Christ thought fit that our redemption should not only be sufficient, but more than abundant, as David foretold : *Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plentiful redemption*—(Ps. cxxix. 6, 7).

O Jesus, Infinite Goodness, I deserved to continue blind, and Thou hast enlightened me with new light; I deserved to continue still more hardened, and Thou hast given me tenderness and compunction; wherefore I now abhor the offences I have committed against Thee more than death, and I feel a great desire to love Thee. These graces, which I have received from Thee, assure me that

Thou hast now pardoned me, and desirest to save me. O my Jesus, who could cease to love Thee henceforth, or could love anything apart from Thee? I love Thee, O my Jesus, and I trust in Thee; increase in me this confidence and this love, that henceforth I may forget everything, and think of nothing but loving Thee and giving Thee pleasure.

O Mary, Mother of God, obtain for me the grace of being faithful to thy Son and my Redeemer.

II.

When speaking in the person of the Messias, Job said : *O that my sins . . . and the calamity that I suffer were weighed in a balance. As the sand of the sea this would appear heavier*—(Job vi. 2, 3). Here Jesus, by the mouth of Job, calls our sins His sins, because He had bound Himself to make satisfaction for us, in order to make His justice ours, as St. Augustine expresses it. On this account the *gloss* upon the text quoted from Job contains this remark : “ In the balance of the Divine justice the Passion of Christ outweighs the sins of human nature.” All the lives of men would not have been sufficient to make satisfaction for a single sin; but the pains of Jesus Christ have paid for all our sins : *He is the propitiation of our sins*—(1 Jo. ii. 2). Therefore, St. Laurence Justinian encourages every sinner who truly repents to hope confidently for pardon through the merits of Jesus Christ, saying to them : “ Measure thy sins by the afflictions of Christ the Sufferer ”; meaning thereby to say : “ O sinner, measure not thy guilt by thy contrition, for all thy works cannot obtain thee pardon; measure it by the pains of Jesus Christ, and from them hope for pardon, for thy Redeemer hath abundantly paid thy debt.”

O Saviour of the world, in Thy flesh, torn with scourings, with thorns, and with nails, I comprehend the love Thou hast borne me, and my ingratitude in having so injured Thee after such love; but Thy Blood is my hope, for, with the price of Thy Blood, Thou hast redeemed

