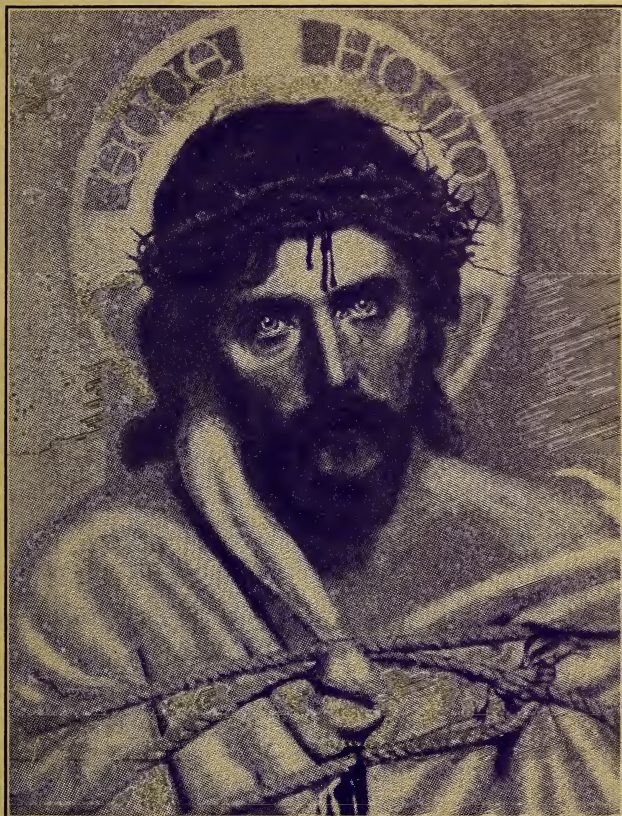


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At Noon on Calvary



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PREPARATORY SERMON

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Eternal and most august Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, we stand before You in the wretched misery of our own sins and nothingness, and humbly pray that every thought and word and action of ours during these three most sacred hours of prayer may be wholly devoted to Your greater honor and glory. Amen.

JESUS of Nazareth, having loved His own and loving them to the end, at the supper table last night took in His sacred hand the bread and gave thanks and blessed and broke and gave to His disciples saying: "Take ye and eat; This is My Body which is given for you." And in like manner taking the chalice after He had supped, He gave thanks and gave to them, saying: "Drink ye all of this for this is My Blood of the New Testament which shall be shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins. This do ye as often as you shall drink for a commemoration of Me." And bidding them farewell in the most sincere words that have ever fallen from human lips, He went up from the city to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. There He struggled with the agony of death until His sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground. With garments red in His own blood and betrayed by a traitor Apostle's treacherous kiss, He was seized and dragged before the assembled Council of the High Priest. Condemned by the priests of His Father's Temple, as a criminal and an outcast, He was reviled and blasphemed during the long hours of the night in His prison dungeon. This morning He was hurried from Pilate to Herod and back again to Pilate, and hooted at as a fool through the streets of the city He loved so well. And Pilate, finding no cause against Jesus, took Him and scourged Him. Mocking His claim as a King, they clothed Him in the white garment as the King of Fools and crowned Him with a crown of thorns. He was condemned to death, as His own people preferred Barabbas, a

murderer, to Him, and called down His Blood upon themselves and upon their children. Carrying His own Cross He is led to this hill of Calvary, the place of execution, and is about to be crucified here between two thieves.

“Greater love than this no man hath than that a man lay down his life for his friend.” Jesus of Nazareth is laying down His life for you. Draw near in reverence and in love to the death scene of the truest friend you have. A vast throng is already here on Golgotha. Some of them know not Jesus of Nazareth and are mere curious lookers-on. I trust that none of you is among this group this afternoon. If mere curiosity has brought you here, God grant that you will return home when the third hour has passed, changed in heart and changed in soul, striking your breast and saying: “This is indeed the Son of God.”

Others are here and many, indeed, who know Jesus of Nazareth. They have heard His wondrous teachings, and have seen the marvelous workings of His Divine power and love. Some are here whose eyes He opened to the light of day. Some to whose ears He gave back the music of their loved ones' voices. Some have climbed this hill to whose palsied limbs He gave health and strength. Some are here who saw Him raise the dead to life. They know Him and once loved Him, but are here today, fickle followers of the mob, to jeer and to blaspheme and to call down His Blood upon them.

There close to the Cross with the instruments of torture in their hands are the soldiers of Rome, the hired executioners, and with them all the Judases of the world who sell their souls for worldly pleasure, and their God for gold. Over to the left, chuckling in their triumph, are the false Priests of God's Temple. And, with them today, all those who find Christ and Christ's principles in the way of their own greed and gain, their pride and selfish, cowardly sensuality, and cry: “Away with Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”

This is a world's tragedy and the whole world has a part in it. Every man, woman and child is standing in one of the groups on Calvary today. Where do you stand? “He who is not with Me is against Me.” There can be no compromise.

We are not against Christ and so have not as yet found our place. Far over to the right, just at the brow of the hill, at the edge of the crowd, stand the holy women and Magdalene and John and Mary the Mother of Jesus. There is our place! We may feel like cowards and hypocrites, but Magdalene the sinner bids us come, and Mary, our Mother, holds out her arms to welcome us. Standing next to the Mother of Jesus we will watch and listen and pray during these three sacred, solemn hours: "Mary, help us to realize that your Son Jesus is doing all this for love of us. Teach us Mother what we can do for love of Him."

"This is, indeed, the Son of God." "Yes, we believe that Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God." And because of this belief since all time is ever present to God, we know, Jesus of Nazareth, that as You hang on Calvary's cross we today are as vividly present to You as the jeering crowd and the hireling soldiers and the traitorous Priests and the faithful group about your Blessed Mother. We know that every sigh of ours will soothe Your Sacred Heart, that every prayer of ours will make reparation for the jeers and the insults and the blasphemies, that every pain of ours will soften the burden of Your sorrow, and every tear of ours will sweeten the bitterness of Your grief. Oh! Mary, Mother of Sorrows, let us stand close to you and see what you see, hear what you hear and feel what you feel here on Calvary. Oh! make us realize and be crushed at the malice of our sins that can inflict such sufferings on your sinless Son, that we may sorrow with Him as you do, that we may mingle our tears with yours. "Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart!" So will we spend these most precious and most sacred hours, pondering with Mary the Mother of Jesus, pondering over every wound and every sorrow and every dying word of our best and truest Friend, her Son and our Lord, until they sink deep down in our hearts, that, learning what He has done for love of us, we may be inflamed to do all we can for love of Him and dedicate and consecrate ourselves forever to Jesus of Nazareth, King of our hearts.

FIRST WORD

"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

THE executioners gather around Jesus. He is stripped of His garments and, as Isaias pictures Him, like a lamb, the Lamb of God, before His murderers meekly lies upon the cross. Oh! Mother Mary, help us to pray with you and to sorrow with your suffering Son as we look down upon the wounds and the deep holes left by the scourging, on the rugged bruise on His shoulder from the weight of the cross, on His thorn-crowned Head with the blood still oozing and clotting over His sacred face. The worst torment of all is about to be inflicted on Him. One of these brutes grabs His hand, and bringing it over the hole in the cross, with well-aimed blows drives the nail through sinew and muscle and flesh. A tremor of most intense pain passes through our Saviour's Body and the fingers contract convulsively around the nail. Then the left hand is affixed. And now the feet, which had been drawn up in pain, are violently pulled down, and with a splitting sound the nail is driven through the instep into the wood. Jesus of Nazareth is nailed to the Cross. A look of horror and of anguish comes over Mary's face. "And Mother Mary, this is your Boy! There lies your Babe of Bethlehem and He is doing all this for love of me! Oh! tell me Mother, what can I do for love of Him?"

Before Pilate and Herod, Christ was silent. In the dungeon last night as the servants of the High Priest mocked Him, Christ was silent. During the scourging and the crowning with thorns, Christ was silent. While carrying His cross to Calvary He spoke but once when He told the women of Jerusalem not to weep for Him but for themselves and their children. The Son of God is being murdered. He is silent no longer but turns to His Father to make His last request. All Heaven is listening for the dying wish of the only begotten Son of God. Hell's minions are leagued against Him, pride and jealousy, avarice and lust, anger and hatred, like ravenous wolves are gathered around Him, devouring His Flesh and drinking His Blood. But there is no cry for vengeance. There is no cry to Heaven

for justice. No cry for pity on Himself or for freedom from pain. The dying wish of the Son of God is a plea of infinite love and of mercy: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And the great Heart of Christ is not satisfied with asking once. He is repeating this same prayer all the time that He is lying there on the cross with His eyes fixed on Heaven. For every blow of the hammer: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He looks towards Annas and Caiaphas and the Pharisees and, turning His eyes to Heaven, even for these He prays: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The same refrain and the same prayer for mercy on the souls of men.

The cross is roughly raised and cruelly let down into the hole in the rock with a thud that sends an agony of pain through every nerve of His sacred Body and makes our Blessed Mother shudder and almost faint away. There He hangs, the Lamb of God, being slain for the sins of the world. He sees beyond the circle of His executioners, beyond the crowd gathered on Calvary, beyond the city of Jerusalem. He sees down the ages into every country, into every city, into every home, into every human heart. He sees the sins of all the world.

You are present here before Him; every deed and thought and word of yours in all their mean, selfish, ungrateful and heinous details. He sees all your sins of sloth and of ingratitude and of selfishness, all your lies and your deceits, all your intemperance, and your self-indulgence, all your thefts and all your lusts. Your sins are murdering Jesus Christ. Your sins nailed Him to the cross. He opens wide the hands your sins have so brutally mangled and as the blood trickles down He pleads with His Father in Heaven for mercy on your soul: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." For very shame we hang our heads. Knew not what we did! Only too well we knew it. Lord Jesus Christ! Base ingrates we were! We knew not what we did simply because we deliberately turned our backs on You and tried to forget what You have done for us.

Last night, Lord Jesus, at the Supper Table, You left

us a memorial of Your Passion. "Do this in memory of Me." Lest we forget, Lord Jesus, You instituted the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar that every morning in the history of the world this great sacrifice of Calvary might be repeated; that as the Divine words, "This is My Body," reecho ceaselessly around the world, You might be there, Lord Jesus our Saviour, ever reminding us of what Your sacred Body is suffering for us. Looking out from the Calvary of our altars on a world steeped in Your own most precious Blood, yet sunk in jealousy and hatred and selfishness and lust, blaspheming You by giving to pleasure and to honor and pride the glory and homage that belong to Your Heavenly Father alone—from the whiteness of the Host ever holding out to Your Father the deep wounds in Your hands and Your feet and Your side, Your Sacred Heart is ever pleading for mercy on the souls of men: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Oh! all ye sinners of the whole world, hearken to the prayer of your bleeding, suffering Saviour. Lose not courage! Lose not hope! Christ is bleeding for you! Christ is pleading for you! His Blood will not be shed in vain. The Father will forgive for His dying Son's sake. If only *you* want to be forgiven. "Body of Christ, be my salvation. Blood of Christ, fill all my veins. Lest I forget! Lest I forget!" We will not forget; we will not crucify our loving Saviour, if the Sacred Body and Blood of Christ is our daily food and drink. Jesus of Nazareth has done all this for love of me. What am I doing for love of Him?

SECOND WORD

"This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

THERE are three executions on Golgotha today. High on the "hill of skulls" three crosses stand out against the dark, angry sky. On two of them hang Judea's most noted criminals. They were caught red-handed in their crimes and were justly tried and condemned. Pilate in trying to hide his own weakness and lack of justice ordered Jesus to be crucified between these two criminals that He might appear like them to be paying the just punishment of crime. Thus another prophesy is being fulfilled: "And with the guilty was He reputed." There stand the High Priests and the Pharisees gloating over their victory and enjoying their full revenge: the Prophet of Galilee, the Wonder-worker, He who gloried in last Sunday's triumph when the people greeted Him with waving palms and the children sang "Hosanna to the Son of David," He who boasted that He could destroy the temple and build it up in three days, He who said that He was the Son of God—hangs there in the place of honor among thieves, the most despised of the three.

In the strange darkness that is settling over Calvary Jesus is deaf to the insults of the mocking Priests and the Pharisees. He is pleading for His companions in torture. He wants their souls! His Sacred Heart is crushed as one of the robbers blasphemes Him, saying: "If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us." Christ's answer is a whispered prayer, as though He did not hear: "Father, forgive him, he knows not what he says." But the other thief would not stand the insult and answering, "rebuked him, saying: 'Neither dost thou fear God seeing that thou art under the same condemnation. And we, indeed, justly, for we receive the rewards of our deeds. But this Man hath done no evil.'"—*The only words of kindness spoken to Jesus on the Cross.* As He hears them He turns His thorn-crowned head and looks into the eyes of the thief. From the grateful Heart of the Good Shepherd in return for one little word of kindness there goes forth into the soul of the sinner God's own

gift of faith and of hope and of love. And in the light of that faith, where thousands of eyes are blind a murderer and a thief sees with the clear vision of an angel of God and makes his act of heroic faith, undaunted hope and devoted love: "Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy Kingdom." A prayer that comes from the very depth of love.

"Lord, remember me—just remember me, for Your thought of me will be my joy and my sufferings will be as nothing if only I know that You are thinking of me." And the Heart of Jesus is moved. His ears do not hear the blasphemers, they only hear these words of one who in a moment has learned to love Him. It is worth all Calvary's pains to hear him say, "Remember me," and Christ in answer looks in love on the thief and His sacred lips utter the words that bring the light of Heaven into the gloom of Calvary, that bring joy and hope into every sinner's heart, that teach the secret power of trusting prayer of faith and the blessing of suffering with Christ: "Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

Mary looks up. Her tears of sorrow are mingled with those of joy. For the Good Shepherd, all bleeding, has found a lost sheep. Christ's first victory is won. Her heart sings her love song of triumph: "My soul doth magnify the Lord." Magdalene looks up into the eyes of the Master and into the face of the thief. She knows the thrill of a forgiven soul and blesses God and the lips that bade her go in peace. The thief looks into the eyes of Christ. He had asked but to be remembered. He is given Heaven in return.

Oh! ye sinners and sufferers of all the world, hearken to the lesson of mercy Christ is preaching to you from the Cross. A man went out from Jerusalem this morning accursed and condemned, was tortured and crucified as a criminal. Day has hardly passed its noon hour when it finds him a saint—canonized by God Himself. Every trial God sends, every suffering with which He blesses you, even your very sins, can bring you nearer to Calvary and to Christ. The most marvelous promise ever made by God to man was made to a crucified murderer: "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." Learn from the Good

Thief to acknowledge your sins and in your trials and afflictions not to try to tear out the nails but to look into the face of your crucified Saviour and say: "I deserve it—He hath done no evil—'Lord remember me.'"

Today a stranger, an outcast, Dismas the thief, hangs on a tree and is saved. Today a friend, a consecrated Bishop of God, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, Judas Iscariot, hangs on a tree and is probably damned. It is the mystery of God's mercy and man's perversity. Christ is dying for Judas and is pleading with the Father to forgive him. The loss of Judas' soul is breaking the Heart of the Master. The Apostle is damned because he is resisting grace and despairs of mercy. The thief is saved, because he hopes and asks for mercy.

Look! there is another hanging on a tree today. He is hanging on Christ's left, just as near as the one to the right. Both hear Christ's prayer for mercy: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Both see His infinite love and patience, both are sprinkled with His precious Blood and yet one blasphemers and the other loves. Christ wants them both. Christ loves them both. Christ is dying for both. How can their bodies suffer the same torments so near to Christ and their souls be so infinitely far apart? Suffering can sanctify or suffering can damn our souls. Happiness can sanctify or happiness can damn our souls. The issue depends on us. It all depends on whether in our joy and in our sorrow, in our smiles and in our tears we curse or bless the God who sends us both. One thief thinks only of his body and in his pain becomes so selfish that he blasphemers his God. The other humbly accepts his pain as the punishment of his crime and thinks only of Christ and of his soul.

Oh! Saint Dismas, for thus we can salute you, since Jesus Christ has canonized you, teach us poor sinners in the midst of our sufferings to pray: "Lord, remember me." Teach us even in the very darkness of our sin to whisper: "Lord! remember me." Teach us to place our joy and our hope and our strength in the loving remembrance we hold in the Heart of Christ. Teach us in the trials and the temptations and the sorrows of life to look into the eyes of

our crucified Saviour and to place all our trust in Him and His Kingdom: "Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy Kingdom." Teach us in all the poverty, injustice and miseries of life to trust Jesus of Nazareth to make up for it all when the crucifixion of life is over. Teach us to be unselfishly kind and thoughtful of others. Oh! Mother Mary, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death that we may hear your Son say to us: "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

Jesus of Nazareth has done all this for love of me. What can I do for the love of Him? For the love of Him I can trust Him in the vivid remembrance of sin and spend each day of my mortal life so living that His Kingdom may come in my heart and in the hearts of others.

THIRD WORD

“Woman, behold thy Son! Son behold Thy Mother!”

It is drawing near the final hour. The silence of death is over the city. A solemn stillness rests over the hill. In the deep darkness of this noon-day night all nature is convulsed at the death of its God. “The wages of sin is death.” And the sinless Son of God is paying the penalty for the sins of men. Agony of soul and suffering of body are telling on Him. His head is drooped in weakness and His breath is coming fast. Jesus of Nazareth is dying. Fear has seized upon the crowd. They are dispersing and moving slowly toward the city. Christ’s prayer for forgiveness is still ringing in their ears and they cannot forget His words to the thief. But it is well that they are going. Mary can come closer now and Magdalene can take her place at the blood-stained feet of Christ and there shed her tears of repentance and of love.

“There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.” If our hearts shudder at the thought of Christ’s sorrow, how can Mary His Mother stand and look at Him suffer? You mothers know what it means to be at the bedside of a sick, suffering child. But the agony of your hearts is satisfied by being able to soothe a bit of the suffering, to ease the pain and dry the tears of your loved one. But what mother could stand and see her boy murdered? “There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother.”—Where else would Mary be? In the sacred days of Nazareth Christ had revealed this day to her and she had yearned for it, as He did, out of love for us. For almost three hours she has been standing here in the silence of her heartbroken anguish.

She can come closer now and can look up into the face of her Boy. Oh! for the days when in the silence of raptured love she spent hour after hour looking into His baby face. “And Mary kept all these things, pondering them in

her heart." So now at the foot of the Cross she ponders these things in the bitter sorrows of her heart. She can feel the pain of every wound and bruise and sore. She looks at His hands and His feet torn and bleeding from the nails, His whole Body quivering in pain.

She sees the Blood oozing out on the crown of thorns, and oh! how she yearns to take the poor aching head of her Boy, to soothe its pains, to wipe the Blood and dirt and spittle from His eyes, to bathe His parched lips. Yes, He suffered in the manger, but there she could take His cold, quivering little Body and wrap it closely to her own, and warm it at her very heart, and kiss away His tears and wreath His baby face in smiles. But now—she can only stand and look.

If that were all it would not be so bad. But the Mother must listen to the blasphemous insults heaped upon her Boy. In the secret of her heart she adores Him. She hears the curses and the blasphemies, and she bows her head and joins her prayer with His: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Oh! At Bethlehem, my Boy, you had the Angels sing Your lullaby and Your glorious song of triumph. Now You only hear insults and curses. At Bethlehem You had the simple shepherd folk kneel at Your manger-crib and adore. Here Your own people, the people whom You loved and served and healed and fed, passing under Your cross revile You as an imposter and a malefactor. In Bethlehem You saw the strange Kings from the East lay their treasures at Your crib. Here the Priests of Your own country see You given gall and vinegar to drink, see You crowned as a mock King and blaspheme Your Kingship—and are glad."

But now all is quiet. Many of the crowd have gone and only a few soldiers remain as guards; Mary draws even closer to the Cross. We have sinned and in as much as we have sinned we have brought this sorrow and agony to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. We stand back! We dare not draw any nearer to Mary our Mother and the Cross, for our sins are murdering her Boy. Our presence would only add to her torture and to His.

During the days that followed the armistice a young

American officer was billeted in the house of a Catholic family. From the very start they made him feel at home. Orders came one day for review and dress parade and when the good mother heard of it she began to clean and press one of his uniforms. The young officer was playing with the children at the table nearby. The mother was busy at her work when the iron struck something hard in one of the pockets. Removing it she found a medal with three initials scratched in the corner. She looked at it for a moment, pressed it to her lips and bowed her head. The young officer looked up in surprise and asked: "Why, mother, what is the matter?" She held out the medal and asked: "Where did you get this?" "Oh! I took it from the body of the last lad I killed." "And that was my boy," she said and kissed it again in a heart-burst of tears. She placed the medal lovingly on the mantle and went back to her pressing.

"There stood by the Cross of Jesus, Mary His Mother." When we see her and realize what we have done our impulse is to run away and hide ourselves in shame. That is what Judas did in his despair. But Mary is looking from us to Jesus and is praying for us. She bids us, the murderers of her Boy, to come and stand by her side. One sinner is there already—Mary Magdalene; and another hangs on a cross. It is a solemn moment. The dying Son is about to speak to His Mother. He looks on Mary and as her eyes lovingly follow His, He turns and looks on John, the beloved disciple—and on you. His parched lips open, and we hear the whisper of these words of love: "Woman, behold thy Son, Son behold Thy Mother." Christ's dying gift to His Mother. Christ's dying gift to the world. "Woman, behold thy Son." And Mary stands forth the Mother of Sorrows, the Mother of sinners. She brought forth Christ in Bethlehem without pain; she has brought us forth on Calvary in the agony of death. Jesus of Nazareth has done all this for love of you. He has so loved you and has so stamped the image of God His Father on your soul with His precious Blood that His own dear Mother will look on you the sinner and see in you her children and the agony of Calvary will make you all the dearer to her. "Woman,

behold thy son" and her arms are open wide to receive you—you who murdered her Boy.

Jesus is whispering to you from the Cross. He has done all this for love of you. He is going to ask you now to do something for love of Him. It is His dying wish: "Son, behold thy Mother." "And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own." So standing here under the Cross of Jesus take His Blessed Mother for your own. In His sight dedicate and consecrate yourself to her: "Lord Jesus, my dying Saviour, I will take her unto my own; I will honor her and I will love her. She will be my Mother. No word or deed of mine will ever wound her heart or bring the blush of shame to her cheeks."

This is Christ's dying wish, and you can do nothing that will please Him more. "If I be lifted up, I will draw all things to Me"; and lifted up on the Cross of Calvary, He knows that the surest way of coming to His love is through Mary His Mother. He knows that through Mary's love human love will be kept pure and manly and divine. He knows that if you love her your little ones will love her and in her love their hearts will be pure and their faith will be strong. Calvary and all its pains and insults and blasphemies are worth the love of a pure boy's and a pure girl's heart. Oh! He knows that it is hard to bring up children and to train them in the love and the fear of God. He knows what it costs—all the toil, all the anxious prayers, all the daily sacrifices. But, oh! you devoted mothers and fathers of the children of God, looking down on His Blessed Mother, Jesus sees you. From the Cross of Calvary the bleeding hand of your dying Saviour is blessing you and your homes.

He sees this great country of ours; how all the powers of Hell are trying to rob His little children of the priceless gem of their purity and their faith and in the love of His Heart he is calling to them from the Cross: "My children, behold your Mother." He sees them gathering around Mary His Mother in the person of you self-sacrificing, God-fearing parents, in the person of those pure-hearted, courageous women who clothed in the habit of His Mother have consecrated their lives to His little ones. And as the dying eyes

of Jesus see the pure eyes of little children looking up to Him and their pure little hearts throbbing in love for Him, His own Heart is glad in the agony of Calvary. His wounds become sweet and there is music in His dying ears—the music of your sinless children's voices singing of Mary and of Him.

FOURTH WORD

“My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

A TERRIBLE silence is hanging over Calvary. Deep, dark clouds have gathered over the city and are rolling up the valley. The sun is eclipsed in the very brilliancy of its noon-day glory. The crowd moving toward the city stops its murmuring and hurries to seek shelter and protection. For there is a distant rumbling in the heavens and bursts of lightning, and the very earth is quaking. Strong soldiers of the legion of Rome standing guard beneath the Cross grow faint and afraid. Christ, too, seems afraid. There is a look of agony on His face and His body is trembling and twitching. Magdalene clasps His quivering feet and shakes with fear as she looks into His agonized Face livid and pale against the dark lowering sky. “Oh, Mother Mary, what does it mean? Your face is pale, too. There is a look of death in your eyes and your lips are quivering. Oh, Mother Mary, what does it mean? Draw near to the Mother of Sorrows. She of all others knows the sufferings of her Boy. She looks up at His mangled Body. She points out blood-stains there, not made by the scourging or the weight of the Cross or the thorns or the nails. They are the red marks of Gethsemane, made there last night in the agony in the Garden when His soul was crushed with sorrow, and His breaking Heart pumped His life’s Blood through every pore of His Body until it trickled to the ground.

Many think only of what Christ suffered in His Body. But Christ’s Soul is as human as His Body and it suffers more. His agony of Soul began in the Garden and is being completed here on the Cross. Agony of soul would have killed Him in Gethsemane, had not the Divinity sustained His human Soul. Agony of soul is actually killing Him here on Calvary simply because He is withdrawing from His soul the sustaining power of the Divinity. Jesus of Nazareth is dying. He who could not despair is letting the bitterness of despair wound Him. He who could not doubt is dying of a broken Heart. “He hath suffered because He willed it.” Hanging on the Cross He still is God. Through

the wonderful mystery of the Incarnation and the mysterious bond of the human nature and the Divine He has it within His right to fill His human Soul with the strength and the consolation and the hope and the joy of the Vision of God. Hovering around Him in adoration are the twelve legions of Angels waiting for the word to confound His enemies and to comfort Him. But of His own choice, looking down the ages into all the broken hearts of all the world, looking down into all the eyes cold and icy in despair, looking down into souls in their anguish, cursing their God for the evils sins have brought, looking down on prayers unanswered and hopes of a lifetime shattered, looking down into homes wherein the shadow of death lies and into other homes wherein are heard the sighs and the moans of helpless little children and of parents in whose hearts the fire of love is quenched—seeing all this anguish of human minds and yearning to suffer every pang that any human soul will ever have to bear, of His own choice, because He loves us, He shuts off the flood-gates of the Divinity and opens wide the gates of Hell and makes His poor human Soul, already weary with the sufferings of His Body, be so overwhelmed with the flood of the filth of sin and with the darkness of despair and of doubt, that in its human weakness it feels as if the very God of Heaven has abandoned it. “My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

Angels sang to that human Soul of His amid the tears and the loneliness of Bethlehem. Angels comforted that human Soul of His last night in the Garden. But the Angels are held back now and the very demons of Hell are let loose at it and are wilder in their fury than the human demons who have covered His Body with sores and stripes and spittle and mud.

From the blue sky over the River Jordan and from the full effulgence of Heaven at Thabor the voice of His Father called to the four corners of the earth: “This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” In the darkness of Calvary, when He needs a Father most and the strong, sustaining power of a Father’s love, He shuts out the light of God’s Heaven and hides the Face of His Father until His human Soul, crushed and overcome, cannot stand the strain

and a heart-rending cry pierces the darkness of Calvary, makes the earth quake and reechoes in the vaults of Heaven until the very Angels tremble,—the most piteous cry of a human soul that ever reached the ears of God: “My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

“Jesus knowing that His hour had come . . . having loved His own loved them to the end.” He wants to feel every pain of body, every anguish of mind and every agony of soul that human nature is capable of. He does not want any single human being to suffer any pain of body or anguish of soul that He has not suffered before him. He suffers all this agony of soul for love of me, and for my strength and consolation in the hour of trial and despondency. On Calvary Christ our Lord out of love for me is concentrating in His soul all the anguish and the despair of every human heart.

I was passing down the long wooden corridor of one of our large base hospitals during the World War when the Captain in charge of the ward sent one of the ward-masters to call me. A mother had just arrived after a day and a night of weary travel only to find that her son had died several hours before and that his body had been already taken to the morgue. After the fatigue of the long journey this shock was more than she could stand and the Captain felt that she was losing her mind. The wild blank stare was already glaring in her eyes. Not a sound. Not a tear. I then placed a small crucifix in her hands, and at the sight of Jesus crucified she heard the priest’s voice where all others had failed to rouse her. “Oh! dear Lord. Father, give me some hope! My boy is gone! The joy of my life is dead!” I then pointed to the crucifix in her hands, telling her that I carried the Blessed Sacrament with me, bade her make her act of resignation to Our Lord and to leave her boy in the hands of His Blessed Mother. As the Captain timidly opened the door he stood there filled with wonder at the picture. The mother’s head was bowed towards me in reverence for our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and her tears were flowing down over the image of her crucified Saviour as she pressed it resignedly to her lips. That afternoon a mother began a sad journey home, but in her heart was a joy that conquered death. Our record book had shown

that her boy had received the Sacraments. The Heart of the Son of Mary, broken on Calvary and still beating within the Host, had soothed the agony of her despair.

And so all of us in our deepest desolation can hear from Calvary the voice of Christ: "My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken me?" Groping in the darkness of our mental anguish and our disappointment and our despair we shall feel the gentle touch of a Mother's hand, who will lead us to where Magdalen, once crushed in soul and an out-cast in despair, kneels in comforting tears at the Master's bleeding feet.

Christ letting His Soul feel the bitterness of despair calls to you from Calvary when the very lights of Heaven are quenched and hope is dead in your soul; when after years of prayers you give up in despair: "Oh! why doesn't God hear me," an echo comes from Calvary; another "Why, my God, my God! why hast Thou abandoned me?"; when, under the burden of an unending sorrow and in the torrent of your ceaseless tears, your human powers of endurance give way and you cry, "Oh why does God treat me thus?"—a voice full of tears and of sorrow and of anguish joins your own: "My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Jesus of Nazareth knows how you feel. His heartbroken cry from Calvary is the only answer to the humanly unanswerable "Why" that goes up unceasingly from heartbroken, sorrow-driven mortals to the ears of God. Christ knows how you feel. He has felt it Himself. Jesus of Nazareth has done all this for love of me. I will do all this for love of Him. I will trust Him even in my despair. I will bear agony of soul for Him who bore agony of soul for me and who for me died of a broken Heart.

FIFTH WORD

"I thirst"

STANDING here under the Cross, our Mother Mary is pondering in her heart. She is pondering over every sore and wound and bruise. Whispering words of consolation as only a mother can, she is asking where the pain is most severe. "Do the nails hurt worst. Lord Jesus, my Boy? I see that the flesh is torn away and You are hanging by the bare and bruised bone. Oh, no! Then it must be the crown of thorns that is tearing into Your very brain and will not let You rest Your head. Oh! tell me, my Boy! Tell mother where you are suffering most?"

Jesus opens His mouth to speak to His Blessed Mother. His tongue is all parched and swollen. He can hardly speak and is barely able to whisper the words: "I thirst." That is His greatest physical torture. He has lost blood in the scourging and the nailing to the Cross. He has been weakened by the long journey to Calvary. Nothing has passed His lips since the Supper last night. He has been hanging here for almost three long hours and, with festering wounds, a violent fever is devouring His whole Body. It inflames His lips, parches His throat, consumes His lungs and is like a fire feeding on the very marrow of His bones. And all this pain and agony is centered in a consuming thirst, a thirst that is so intense that the Body seems insensible to all other pain. "Mother Mary, and this is all for love of me. Tell me, Mother, what can I do for your Boy and my dear Lord Jesus?"

It is not impatience that makes Our Lord complain of His thirst. One more suffering is possible. One more insult can still be added. And so weakened unto death, with eyes blood-shot and weary, He whispers in a feeble voice: "I thirst," knowing that the vinegar would be given Him to burn into the wounds about His Face and to corrode His throat and that the more bitter vinegar of insult and de-

rision would be hurled at Him by those He loved. But loving to the end and yearning to suffer everything for us, He whispers: "I thirst."

Oh God! at whose word there sprang up the rivers and the sparkling fountains, You thirst and there is no one to give You a drop of water. Oh God! who gave Your people water from the rock in the desert and gave Moses the wonderful rod that made the bitter waters sweet, they are giving You vinegar in return. Oh Christ our Saviour! You can see before You some of those whom You fed on the mountain and to whom You had said in loving kindness: "If any man believe in Me, he shall not thirst forever." You thirst—and they are thanking you with the bitterness of jeers and of insults.

Our Blessed Mother stands helpless. Her Boy is burning up with fever and dying of thirst and she cannot even moisten His burning lips. Oh! why should He suffer thus! oh! why should His Mother's heart be broken! Every pain is a love token to us. Every word bears a message of love to us. Draw near to Mary and watch and listen, ponder and pray.

Coming to Calvary this morning Christ had said to those who wept for Him: "If in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?" If sin has wrought such an agony of suffering on the sinless Body of the Son of God, what will the fires of Hell be to the sinner himself? To save us from the consuming fires of Hell, He thirsts. To quench in us the devouring flames of passion, He thirsts. He is the victim of sin. He is atoning for every sin of every human heart. His innocent Body is suffering for all our sins of sensuality and self-indulgence; He thirsts to redeem us from the slavery of our senses and to save us from the tyranny of our passions,—to teach us to conquer ourselves. Jesus of Nazareth, You have thus treated Your sinless Body for love of me. I will not indulge the passions of my body against You, but for love of You I will conquer myself, my unruly appetites, my lower cravings and baser passions.

But there is another thirst that Christ is suffering that all the waters of the world cannot quench. It is a thirst

of soul and it is really this thirst that makes Him complain. He looks down from His Cross into the hearts of all men. He is dying for love of them and by few is He loved in return. His Sacred Heart yearns to be loved. He is giving His life's Blood for love and from most men, even from those who know Him and pretend to love Him, He receives coldness and indifference and ingratitude in return. Harken to the call of the Heart of Jesus in the deep, dark silence of Calvary: "I thirst,"—yes, thirst for the love of your hearts.

A little boy, 6 years and 8 months old, was taken seriously sick at his play. He was rushed to the hospital and had to be operated on immediately. As the little one was coming out of the ether he was twitching and writhing in pain. A terrible fever was devouring his little body and with piteous, dilated eyes he looked up at the good Sister and begged for a cup of water. His lips were parched, his tongue was thickly coated and dark and dry. No word of the good Sister could soothe him; the moistening of the lips and the washing of the mouth did not satisfy him. Bitter were his tears and pitiful his pleading for a cup of water. The Sister asked me to try to calm him. Leaning over his bed I said: "Now Jimmie, Sister can't let you drink any water for an hour or so." His little hands clenched the counterpain and his wide open little eyes looked up to me in an agony of pleading: "Oh Father! Please get me a drink of water." On the wall there in the children's ward, right opposite Jimmie's bed, was a large Crucifix. I pointed to it and said: "Jimmie, who is that?" He turned his eyes to the Crucifix, and looking for a moment, said: "Jesus." "Wasn't Jesus thirsty, Jimmie, when He was hanging on the Cross?" He bowed his little head in reply. "Well, Jimmie, you tell Jesus now that you know what He must have suffered and that you will offer up your thirst to Him." And that little mite of a child fixed his eyes dimmed with tears on the image of his crucified Jesus, and with his little body twitching in pain and his little hands clenching the coverlet, he uttered no word of complaint and never once asked for a drink of water. He was doing it for Jesus crucified. "I thirst"—and in answer a little baby waif of a child in the ward of one of our city hospitals is stretching

his little hand away back to Calvary and quenching the thirst for love in the Heart of his Saviour.

Jesus of Nazareth is doing all this for love of him. A mite of a child can do all this for love of Him. What am *I* going to do for love of Jesus crucified?

SIXTH WORD

"It Is Finished"

THREE years ago, as the sun was setting over the hills near Bethany, beyond the Jordan, John the Baptist stood talking with his disciples. Just at the brow of the hill over against the sunset, a tall white-robed figure was passing. The Baptist pointed Him out with the strange words of Isaias the Prophet: "Behold the Lamb of God! Behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world." In this dismal noon-day twilight of the darkest day that ever settled over this earth, the same Figure stands out ghastly white against the angry sky high on Judea's hill.

Jesus of Nazareth from Calvary calls back through the centuries to Isaias and back to John the Baptist on the Jordan's banks. "It is finished"—the Lamb of God has paid the price. From Calvary's cross He then looks down the centuries that are to come. Out against the glow of each morning's dawn the same white-robed Figure is passing across the margin of the world, keeping pace with the rising sun: "Behold the Lamb of God," clothed in the whiteness of the Host. Behold Him who takes away the sins of the world. Jesus of Nazareth, having loved His own has loved them to the end. "It is finished." He can do no more.

"It is finished." The Lamb of God has paid the price! The work of Redemption is finished. All that the Prophets foretold has been accomplished. What God promised in the Garden is fulfilled. There a human hand stretched out to the forbidden tree in proud defiance against its God, closed the gates of Heaven and called down the curse of God on every human soul. Here the Divine Hand of God stretched out in humblest obedience on the tree of sacrifice, opens the gates of Heaven and stamps in its own Blood every soul that wills it with the seal of salvation and with the mark of the Living God. "It is finished." The Lamb of God is taking away the sins of the world.

"It is finished." His enemies are conquered. "Have confidence, I have conquered the world." He looks to Mary

His Mother and through the merits of His death He sees the serpent of Hell crushed and conquered under her heel. "It is finished"—His mangled Body has conquered the lust of the flesh. "Body of Christ, save me." "It is finished"—with a stable for His birth and a borrowed grave waiting to receive His murdered Body He has conquered the lust of the eyes for pleasures and for gold and for the good things of earth. "It is finished"—He has conquered the pride of life by "humbling Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross." "It is finished." All enemies—the devil, the flesh and the world are conquered. Jesus turns to Mary: "It is finished, Mother,"—all is finished that I revealed to you in the sacred days of Nazareth's boyhood home. Jesus lifts His eyes to His Father in Heaven: "It is finished—Father, I have finished the work Thou gavest Me to do."

Jesus looks down the valley to the city. There in all its splendor stands the Temple, but it is gruesomely white in the darkness that envelopes the city, white like the ghost of a past that is forever gone. The Holy of Holies is holy no longer. The blood of lambs flowing in Solomon's Temple will no longer appease the living God for the sins of man. "It is finished." Behold the Lamb slain on Calvary's mound, He takes away the sins of the world!

And Jesus turns from Solomon's Temple and the Holy City and sees spread out before Him the cities and the hamlets and the wide stretches of country over the face of the earth. He sees His Cross of Calvary multiplied a thousand-fold as on as many altars His sacred Body and Blood are offered for the sins and the souls of men. "It is finished. This is My Body that shall be delivered for you. This is My Blood that shall be shed for you." "It is finished"—never more will sin cry unanswered to Heaven for vengeance, for from our altars His Blood will ever cry for mercy on the souls of men. "It is finished"—the Sacrifice is offered that will never end, but ceaselessly from the rising to the setting of the sun the Sacrifice of Calvary's Cross will be offered as a clean oblation to God on our altars, until Jesus of Nazareth comes in glory with that same Cross to judge the living and the dead.

Jesus turns His eyes towards His executioners. "It is finished." Malice can devise no new torture. There is no spot on His sacred Body free from wound or pain. And all this for love of me. "What is there I ought to do more for my vineyard and have not done?" Is there anyone can say that Christ could do more for him? "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friend." "It is finished." Love has gone its limit. It can do no more. And all this for love of me.

Oh! come close to Mary and the Cross. Put your hand there over the Sacred Heart of your dying Saviour before It has ceased to beat and learn from the last throb of the Heart of Jesus how much He loves you. And as you draw back your hand, red with the Blood of Jesus Christ, raise it to the Father in Heaven and before the world, standing beneath the Cross of Christ, repeat with Him: "It is finished." I am finished with sin that is crucifying my loving Saviour. "It is finished"—red with the Blood of Jesus Christ, this hand of mine never will be stretched out to do Him harm, or to lead me or others into the occasion of sin. "If I be lifted up I will draw all things to Me." Draw me to Thee Lord Jesus with the strongest bonds of love and of Blood and in the strength of Your love, bid me to be perfect as Your Heavenly Father is perfect, that believing in You I may do the works that You have done, that ever partaking of the unending Sacrifice of Calvary, eating Your Flesh and drinking Your Blood in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, "I may ever live in You and You in me." Each day of my mortal life I will look to You dying for me and say "It is finished"; Christ, this day I have lived for You, there is no sacrifice neglected, there is no mark of love passed over, there is no enemy of soul unconquered. "I have finished today, Lord Jesus, the work Thou gavest me to do." Jesus of Nazareth, Thou hast done all this for me. I can, Lord Jesus, do all this for Thee.

SEVENTH WORD

“Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.”

THE final moment has come, the moment promised in the Garden, the moment foretold by the Prophets, the moment longed for by the great Heart of Christ. All earth is wrapt in the horror of the noon-day darkness; birds are screeching and animals are running mad in fright. The three crosses stand out like specters against the blackened sky. Jesus our Saviour is dying! Draw up close to Mother Mary in all reverence and love, and watch her dying Son. He is dying for you. He is loving you unto the end. The struggle of death is upon Him. He is in His agony. His bloodshot eyes gaze fixedly into space. His Body droops and sags. The centurion says: “He is dead!” But Mother Mary answers:—“No! not yet!” For lo! by some tremendous effort He is lifting His head! A Divine light is coming into His eyes! He looks from thief to thief and then straight up into the dark Judean sky and with a voice that can be heard ringing in the valley and reechoing along the distant hills, He cries: “Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.” Those were His last words and “bowing His head He gave up the ghost.”

This loud voice pierces the heavens and is the cry of triumph over sin and over death and over Hell. It is a cry to the Father that His Son is coming. The golden star that the Angels fixed over Bethlehem the night the Father gave His only Son for the freedom of the world is shining behind the dark clouds over Golgotha where the Angels are waiting to welcome Him home. He is coming battle-scarred and victorious—the Good Shepherd red with the Blood He shed in seeking His sheep and with the lost sheep upon His shoulder—the penitent thief of Calvary and the penitent sinners of all the world. He cries out with a loud voice that rings down the valley of despair to Judas and to all those souls who think that God will not pardon them, that Christ’s all-merciful Heart can-

not love them. He cries out in a loud voice! It is His last cry to the impenitent thief, the last pleading call of God's mercy, the last anxious plea of God's love to those who will not listen, to those who will not understand.

At the sound of Your cry, Lord Jesus, the graves around Jerusalem are opening and giving up their dead. Oh! Jesus, from Your cross today before You die let Your cry carry down the streets and into the homes of our city and pierce the hard rocky tombs of the hearts of those we love but in whom all love of You is dead. Make them, Jesus, love You, and in Your dying power and the grace of Your most precious Blood call them forth to a new life that the peace You came to give may reign in our homes. "Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world, give us peace."

Jesus of Nazareth is calling out in a loud voice to every human heart. We are all sentenced to death. We all must go through this agony. Christ is calling to us all to teach us how to die, even as He has taught us how to live. "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Thus death since Jesus died is but the home-coming of a child to its Father's arms. "In the hour of my death call me and bid me come to Thee that with Thy Saints I might praise Thee for ever and ever. Amen." "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death."

Jesus has lowered His eyes. A tremor is passing over His Body. The end is near. But as last night in the Garden the soldiers could not approach until He gave them leave, so now death dare not lay its cold hand upon Him until He bows His consent. "He was delivered because He willed it." He bows His head to His Father in Heaven—"obedient unto death." He bows His farewell to Mary His Mother.—There is a gasp! His arms are extended convulsively, the whole Body sinks down, the knees fall in. He bows His head and lets it sink to His breast. Jesus of Nazareth is dead. Mary is childless. We are saved.

At the foot of the Cross beneath the mangled Body of Jesus kneel John the Beloved Disciple and Mary Magdalene and Mary His Mother. They are the first adorers of the

Holy Cross: "We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee, because by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world." They rise and Magdalene leads Mary to a little mound near the Cross. Silently and reverently St. John and Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus and the centurion lower the Body of Jesus and place It in His Mother's arms.

"And Mary the Mother of Jesus kept all these things, pondering them in her heart." Back over thirty-three years her ponderings go. The stars are shining softly in the clearest sky that ever mirrored God's beauty. She stands by an empty manger, when lo! the solemn silence of earth's most peaceful night is broken by the whispered songs of Angel choirs—as Mary holds up her Babe on Bethlehem's hill to bless the world He had just come to save. So Mary ponders now in this most horrible darkness as amid the thunder of Heaven and the rumble of earth she sits childless by a bloody Cross. And Mary on Calvary's hill holds out the lifeless arms of her murdered Boy to bless the world He has just died to save.

Oh! Mother Mary! What does it mean? Is this what my sins have done to your Sweet Babe of Bethlehem? Ask Him to bless me, Mother, as you bathe His eyes and ears and mouth and tongue and hands. Pray for me, Mother, for it was my hands with their greed and lust that drove in the nails. It was my tongue and its impatience, unkindness and blasphemies that made Him thirst. It was my ears, encouraging scandal and full of pride that made Him bear the insults and the blasphemies. It was my eyes, seeking self and pleasure that made His all bloodshot and sore. It was my sensual body that crucified the sinless Body of your Boy.

Jesus of Nazareth has done all this for love of me. What can I do, Lord Jesus, for love of Thee?—As in the thunder of Sinai the Father gave His Ten Commandments to Moses, so now in the thunder of Calvary comes Christ's answer from His Mother's arms—a silent challenge from the open wounds in His hands and His feet and His side, a silent pleading from His lifeless eyes:—"If you love Me keep My commandments"—"If any man will come after

Me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”

At noon today, Jesus of Nazareth, You climbed this hill of Calvary crowned with thorns and carrying Your cross. At this third hour, kneeling at Your Mother's feet, I bow my head to be crowned with Your blood-stained crown of thorns and, in the strength of the Holy Eternal Spirit, I take up Your cross daily to follow You, in a blameless, spotless Christian life. You have done all this for love of me. If You have thus treated Your sinless Body for love of me, I will be done with my sinfulness for love of You. With Mary Mother as my witness, I here and now consecrate and dedicate myself to You, Jesus of Nazareth, King of my heart.


Eternal and most august Trinity, Father and Son and Holy Ghost, “it is well for us to be here.” I thank Thee that Thou hast revealed these things to the little ones and the weak ones. Father glorify Thy Son that Thy Son may glorify Thee. As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh that He may give everlasting life to all whom Thou hast given Him, and this is everlasting life that they may know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.

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