

Eleven Addresses during a Retreat of the Companions of the Love of Jesus,
engaged in perpetual intercession for the conversion of sinners.

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ADDRESS V.

Jesus' love for souls, seen in some special Sufferings of the Passion.

JESUS' love for souls, for the souls for whom we pray and for our own, what did it not make Him bear! I have dwelt only on some few aggravations of those Sufferings. They are but a few hints for love to ponder over, and, it may be, to help to deepen our thought of the Infinite Love for us sinners, shewn in every pang, which for us He invited and heaped upon Himself, and clothed Himself with them as a robe and a diadem. I would now add only three more.

Consider 1, The exceeding delicacy of His Human Frame. I do not mean by this any comparison with our human frames, conceived as they all are in original sin, of which the one may yet be more refined than another. Our frames are all made for suffering and for death, the penalty of our human sin. They are framed for dissolution. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt Thou return," was the sentence passed upon us all alike in Adam. To be "sown, in dishonour, in weakness, in corruption,"¹ is the condition of our rising to "power, to incorruption, to glory." *His* Body could not "be holden of death;"² *His* purity could not "see corruption."³ But then, in that proportion was every Suffering aggravated, which prepared for that three days' severance of Soul and Body, though of neither from His Godhead. We can see, in our human frames, how a blow or a piercing pang, which falls harmlessly or dully upon one frame, shoots through another with an electric shock. But in our case, such a delicate frame is simply crushed by such a pang. It endures it, and all is over. Suffering with us is for the most part evenly distributed by God's tender justice, that, if it is heavy, it docs not endure; if protracted, it is mitigated. To His Martyrs God has often given painlessness amid torture, and has allowed brute rage to spend its violence un-felt, in order to show by Whose might they were upheld and were invincible. "The Lord laid upon Him the iniquity of us all."⁴ "He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; by His stripes we were healed." Each Suffering was a part of our redemption; and so each was felt to the utmost, as only Innocency could suffer, as only Divinity could uphold. We have gone over those outward sufferings one by one, in Passion-tide. We have watched that dread Agony, in which "His pores, dissolving, wove a winding-sheet of Blood."⁵ We know what scourging is even to the roughest of our human frames, how it tears the flesh open, even to the bone; how the nerves are racked and riven, and human science has to watch, how much the frame can endure, and whether it will die under the stroke. The Roman soldiers knew of no such measures of mercy; they had no "forty stripes save one;"⁶ their's was not even an abuse of human justice, whereby

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 42-44.

² Acts ii. 24.

³ Ib. 31, xiii. 37.

⁴ Is. liii. 5, 6.

⁵ Hymn in Paradise for the Christian soul, P. v.

⁶ Deut. xxv. 3, 2 Cor. xi. 24.

the penalty of guilt may fall upon the innocent. Jesus was delivered to their will, and we know how human injustice intensifies human hate; human hate hates to be overcome by human endurance, by its own powerlessness to inflict more than human patience can suffer. We see this before our eyes in the histories of martyrs. We know how brutality calls out brutality; how a brute crowd can vie in doing, what any one, however brutalised, would cower back from doing alone. And here was a Sufferer, aged apparently and worn by His life-long sufferings, His inseparable friends and acquaintances,⁷ who alone never left Him, so that His people could say, "Thou art not fifty years old,"⁸ to one who had not seen three and thirty years, who had not yet reached the period of our greatest physical strength. Yet tender and delicate as was His Virgin-born frame, it was formed to endure what iron sinewy strength has sunk under. But He was Almighty God, and Almightyness was put forth to enable Him to suffer. How those poor brutalised soldiers must have blinded themselves, ere they could have struck that sacred Face, so meek in all Its demeanour, out of Whose Eyes shone those rays of pitying love! Perhaps they struck Him the more, that they might not see It. And then, when they had⁹ marred that Face, so that It ceased well-nigh to be the face of man, then they could wreak their hatred on the Jew who would be a king, who disputed the rule of the world with Cæsar: they could mar it, undisturbed by His Majesty, except the majesty of suffering.

That dreadful horrible scourging was one aggravation of all the later Sufferings of Jesus. We can guess, in our coarse frames, what must have been the pressure of the heavy Cross on that tender Frame, or on those mangled Shoulders. I have seen temporary delirium under the pain of the removal of the clothes or dressings from the wounds to which they adhered. What when the brutal soldiers' hands tore off again roughly the dress which had been pressed into those deep wounds by the heavy Cross, the deep wounds of a tender frame exhausted by the draining of His Blood, which He had shed for us. And then again, when those tender Hands and Feet were riven by the nails, and that torn Divine Body was racked on the hard bed of the Cross, the bones, as the Psalmist tells us, were dislocated one from the other. A strong man, who loved life, has willed to die, sooner than endure the suffering of having a dislocated limb stretched out, to be replaced. And David says in the Person of Jesus, "All my bones are severed, one from the other."¹⁰

Not that we should think that, by putting any or all of this together, we can form any idea even of His bodily sufferings. I say it only, that we may be sure that we can form none, that we may not think that, because we hear in the Gospels some details, and some only, of those awful Bodily Sufferings, we know any thing of what they were to that Holy Virgin-born Form. We may see before our eyes, those Cheeks swollen with the blows of the iron-gloved hand of the soldier, the Jaw dislocated with the blow, the Breast, itself too furrowed with those harrowing lashes, and distended as it hung on the Cross, almost to bursting; the thorns driven into the Brow first by the rude blows of the soldiers, and then by the hard Cross into His Sacred Head; we may imagine the most intolerable thirst, such as has driven men mad; we may picture to ourselves, how there was sharpest pain in every limb, in every spot, of His Sacred Body (the consolation, among other things, of our bodily sufferings, that we so far suffer with Him, that each bodily pain may

⁷ Is. liii. 3.

⁸ St. John viii. 57.

⁹ Isa. lii. 14.

¹⁰ Ps. xxii. 14.

be hallowed by union with His); we may picture to ourselves every sharpest conceivable pain in every point of our human frame, the sharpest torture we have ever heard of, the rack, by which the distended nerves in each joint are so almost torn asunder, that the sufferer, who is unsupported by Divine Grace, jerks out the required blasphemy with scarce a will; or the Back so forced asunder in each vertebra, that each such suffering would convulse the whole frame in death; or the Holy Cheeks so shaken by the blows, that every tooth should have its own fiercest pain; or every cell of the Brain, shooting with sharp pang of pain, that it seems as if every shoot were all which the frame could endure and still live. But if we picture these, all the very utmost which human frame has ever endured separately, concentrated in Him, so that every point in His Human Form should be a sort of focus of suffering, each piercing to the utmost, Brain, Eyes, Ears, Tongue, Teeth, Arms, Hands, Feet, Nails, Back, Breast, Heart (for of this too the Psalmist specially speaks, before His Death),¹¹ the racking of every nerve along their whole course in His Divine Frame, and that terrible exhaustion, which has made the being bled to death alone an awful suffering, so that the frame, it seems, cannot live and yet does not die,—when we have completed all which imagination could supply, drawn from every acutest suffering we have witnessed or heard of, gathered into one, then too we have not begun the Suffering of that Divine Form. For It had indeed “the likeness of our sinful flesh.” Yet, in the exquisite sensibility of that Frame, which God the Holy Ghost created anew in the Virgin’s womb of her cleansed substance, but by His own Divine Operation, what the pains were, which corresponded to the pains of our coarse natures, we cannot even imagine. Only when we think of those Precious Sufferings which were the price of our redemption, we must not think of them, as of one altogether like ourselves. They were all that, but they were a fierceness of suffering in a Frame, which had a capacity of, to us unimaginable, Suffering. And all this He endured, of His own choice as a whole, but as a passive Sufferer in each infliction, for love of us sinners and for our redemption, for love of the sinners, one by one, for whom, with ourselves, we pray. Oh how inestimable must be the value of the soul in the sight of Him Who made it for Himself, and so redeemed it, that He might not lose it!

2. Akin to this tenderness of His sacred Flesh was the tenderness of His Human Soul, Which was outraged more than His Human Body was torn, and Which endured those outrages for love of us sinners. We are wont to speak of the soul, as if, because it is one thing, it were therefore much the same in different human beings. We understand, of course, the difference between a soul in sin and a soul in grace; the soul of one who, like some degraded forms of humanity, is seemingly acted upon by some unknown dealings of grace only, or, if acted upon, is acted upon, only thence to derive a fresh occasion of doing despite to the grace of God, and a soul, like those of the Blessed Apostles “filled with the Holy Ghost.”¹² But these distinctions relate to qualities superinduced for good or ill, not to the original structure of the soul. Yet human souls, in their original structure and capacity too, vary indefinitely one from another, even as those blessed spirits do, in their several Choirs, to whose broken ranks they are, if they persevere, to be advanced, as, to fill them up those souls were created. Our Blessed Lord’s Human Soul, having been created to be for ever united with the Person of God the Son, was like to our human souls in all their sinless infirmities; it was like them as being a soul, in every thing belonging to

¹¹ Ps. xxii. 22.

¹² Acts ii. 34, iv. 8, vi. 3, 5, vii. 55, ix. 17, xi. 24, xiii. 9, 52.

the nature of a soul, without which it could not be such. But the Soul of Christ, being created in order to be united with the Word, was created with greater perfections and greater capacities and was a higher Object of the love of the Holy Trinity Who created It, than all the rest of creation or all possible creations collectively. Such was the Soul, united with God the Son, seeing all things in the Word, with more than all other created perfections, yet with all the perfection of human tenderness, Which had to suffer during those awful hours, in which all malice, human or diabolical, was let loose upon It.

That tenderness was wounded in all the most opposite ways, yet, by reason of the perfection of His knowledge, in all those ways at once. He never lost sight of one. Consider we—apart, the good and the evil. Now was the hour, prophesied of by Symeon, when the sword was to pierce His Mother's soul, and what a soul this must have been, which was created to be His Mother's soul, which had been prepared to be the soul of that Tabernacle wherein God was to dwell, sanctified by His Presence for those nine months in her womb, who nursed His Divine Infancy with a mother's love, upon whom the Eyes of the Divine Infant must have shone continually with Divine but also Human love, she, the inseparable companion of those thirty hidden years, nearly His whole life; and yet her soul was to be pierced! He spared not, could not spare, His Mother's grief; yet how must such grief pierce the Divine Son! What a parting! And that, to be the beginning of those long years of severance, in which the disciple and the creature, though the beloved disciple, was to be her son, instead of her Creator! All sorrow would to us be swallowed up in such a sorrow. But this hindered not the sorrow for the few who then loved Him besides, the Apostles in their stupefaction, St. Mary Magdalene in her doubtless empassioned grief, St. John, silently looking up to that Breast, on which his head had lain, to those Eyes, now well-nigh blinded by those swollen cheeks, yet still beholding him; the women who lamented Him and whose coming sorrows He foretold them of; those who should be moved by that sad sight, and who should "smite their breasts and return," and the faithful ones, who should, when all was over, ask His Body from Pilate, and bury It in all the greater grief, because in perplexity. We have had before our minds already, all those other sufferings from the sufferings of all His elect, from the shortcomings, open sins, ingratitude, of so many who would yet be saved, and the misery even of their repentance.

Yet all these sorrows ended in their endless joy. There were other sorrows which were remediless. There is something so terrible even to us, such as we are, in human hatred. It is related of a celebrated poisoner of noble family, how terrible was the sight of all that sea of heads, which came to witness her execution, since she felt that she must be the object of all their hate. Except the loss of God, I cannot conceive a suffering in Hell greater than that of the horrible hate of one another, especially of those who, by mutual sin and chiefly by unlawful love, have brought each other thither. But these "hated Him without a cause."¹³ This causeless hate is so spoken of in the Psalms as an aggravation of those Sufferings. We see them in the Psalmist all around Him. "Many oxen are come about Me: fat bulls of Basan close Me in on every side. They gape upon Me with their mouths, as it were a ramping and a roaring lion. Many dogs are come about Me; the council of the wicked layeth siege against Me. They stand staring and looking upon Me.—I am a very scorn of men and the outcast of the people. All they that see Me laugh

¹³ Ps. xxxv. 19. xxxviii. 19. lxix. 4.

Me to scorn: they shoot out their lips and shake their heads,”¹⁴ And then, he tells beforehand the blasphemy, which they, of their free-will, would use.¹⁵ Prophecy tells of all those gibes and fierce hate, as though they were the fiercest part of that superhuman suffering. Look at them one by one; listen to the hypocritical blasphemy of the Pharisees, insulting Him with His inability to save Himself¹⁶ (and He knew that He was unable, else He could not have saved us), and the coarse crowd, justifying their choice of Barabbas by blaspheming Him for saying, “I am the Son of God;”¹⁷ and this echoed by the two malefactors,¹⁸ who hung by Him, as though *He* were the third and chief: so close to Him, that they might almost hiss it in His Ears. And this was the language of all who passed by. The crowd, as the coarse multitude do at executions, were all anxious to catch a sight of their work, to see how He, Whom they had rejected and for Whose crucifixion they had clamoured, bore Himself, and so they “passed by, reviling Him, wagging their heads.”¹⁹ Each seasoned his blasphemy with some separate addition of his own; and every coarser or more telling blasphemy was doubtless received with the bravoës of that horrible applause; the duller only followed his fellows with that long monotonous gibe. Each glared at Him, with that expression of fierce hatred, such as, I believe, only a Jew can wear. I never saw any look so Satanic, as that wherewith a Jew spake to me some traditional blasphemy. And that poor Jew’s was but the memory of 1800 years, the shadow of an inextinguishable hate. And this was but the winding up of all that previous hate, the eager antipathy of those, who suborned perjurers, appealing to His Father for their truth; ever sending forth fresh victims of hell, as the former could not agree in their falsehoods: then the cold-blooded hypocrisy of Caiaphas, blaspheming Him Whom he accused of blasphemy, and leaguëing others in his blasphemous sentence upon his Judge; then the mad multitude of them, thronging as one man ²⁰to Pilate, clamouring to him, bearing in on him the more fiercely with their accusations for his weak resistance;²¹ then the vehement passionate accusation before Herod;²² and Herod’s wrath at His unresisting silence, and his impious mockery of Him, Who would not vindicate Himself by miracles; and the profane mock-royalty with which he arrayed Him:²³ then His own Jews, those whom He had so loved, whom He had healed, among whom He had gone about doing good, rising from rage to rage, as they plunged themselves deeper into sin, from the cry for Barabbas, the “Crucify Him, crucify Him,” to the “His Blood be upon us and upon our children:”²⁴—that terrible imprecation, whose effect on their outcast race He so well knew: then the hatred in the scourging, the blindfolding, the buffeting, the insults to Him even as a prophet,²⁵ and that dreadful road to Calvary. How terrible a thing is knowledge without love! The more they knew, the worse they hated. How horrible a thing is sin! The

¹⁴ Ib. xxii. 12, 13, 16, 17, 6, 7.

¹⁵ ver. 8. St. Matt. xxvii. 43.

¹⁶ Ib. xxvii. 42.

¹⁷ Ib. 39, 40.

¹⁸ Ib. 44, St. Mark xv. 32.

¹⁹ St. Matt. xxvii. 39.

²⁰ St. Luke xxiii. 1.

²¹ Ib. 5.

²² Ib. 10.

²³ Ib. 11.

²⁴ St. Matt. xxvii. 25.

²⁵ Ib. xxvi. 68.

more they sinned, the madder they became in sin.

And He, the All-Holy, knew their hearts too. *We* hear but some outward cry or yell of passion or of rage: *we* may hope that the inmost self may not be so bad as the outward expression. Jesus knew. This was, in many, but the culminating point of the hatred of years. It was gathered into one, as the fruit of all before. “Now ye have both seen and hated both Me and My Father.”²⁶ And now, He knew who would not repent. Some of them, a father says, “the Blood which in their raging they shed, believing they drank.”²⁷ But He knew that Judas, whom He had chosen to be one of the twelve, whom He had admitted to His friendship, whom, to the last, He had sought in vain to win back, would “go to his own place.”²⁸ One robber by His side would not be converted. Jesus, Salvation, hung by his side; and he would not! The Price of his salvation was trickling down the Cross by him; and he was obdurate! He took up the rude cries of those around; he heard them die away on the other side of Jesus, as his happy fellow-robber was converted; perhaps he had some hope, amid his blasphemy, to goad Jesus to save his miserable death-like life. He heard the promise to his penitent brother; Jesus spoke to his soul through him; but for him Jesus was shedding His blood in vain. Perhaps he hated Jesus the more, thinking that He had some magical power, whereby He might save him, and did not.

He knew what minds those horrible cries issued forth from: He knew where, through their impenitence, those blasphemies would be prolonged. He had said of Judas at the beginning, “One of you is a devil;”²⁹ and now He was surrounded by a legion of devils. He had said to the emissaries of the Chief Priests, “This is your hour and of the powers of darkness.”³⁰ And now Satan seemed to speak audibly by the mouths of all that miserable multitude! For how else could they endure so to speak against the All-holy, Who had ever sought their good? O that “and ye would not!”³¹ from what depths of tender, persevering, grieved love, it sprang! “Ye would not!” It is like the unwilling closing of a door, as He had to leave them without.³² But what a parting! worse than the parting from His Mother; for to her too it was “expedient that He should go away.”³³ What a parting! of the dying Saviour from those who would not be saved, but who hated Him for His love. This suffering too He endured, fruitless for them, but full of grace and salvation for us, and those we pray for, who will be converted and live.

3. Once more, there was one seeming severance, of which we scarce dare speak. We may have known what misery it was, to try to convert a soul which would not be converted. Of the awful seeming forsaking by the Father, we can have no thought. Yet it was the one Suffering, which it seemed as if His Human Nature could hardly bear. All the accusations before Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod, had not wrung one word or sound from Him. “As the lamb before his shearers is dumb,”³⁴ so “He” “the Lamb of God,” “opened not His Mouth.” Herod and his court and men of war had counted Him a fool for His

²⁶ St. John xv. 24.

²⁷ St. Aug. on St. John Hom. xl. § 2. p. 541. and p. 527, 1104, 1200. Oxf. Tr., and passim in his works.

²⁸ Acts i. 25.

²⁹ St. John vi. 70.

³⁰ St. Luke xxii. 53.

³¹ St. Matt. xxiii. 37.

³² St. Luke xiii. 25.

³³ St. John xvi. 7.

³⁴ Is. liii. 7.

persevering silence. The blows, the mocking, the blasphemies, the riving nails, had not extorted one sound from Him. He prayed for His executioners: He promised Paradise to the penitent robber: He gave St. John to His Mother as a son, His Mother to be his Mother; He spake to fulfil prophecy, and heeded not the insult which it elicited. One loud cry alone was heard, and that at the ninth hour,³⁵ at the close, when all was all-but-finished. Then, after all besides was over, came that one last trial. It came doubtless, in part, to sanctify and to impart Its saving virtue to our last struggle with death. We have, some of us, seen, perhaps felt, what it is to be, as though forsaken by God. Yet we could but say, with the penitent robber, “we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds.”³⁶ It has indeed been the annealing of saints: it is mostly the invigorating stimulus to deep repentance, calling out the latent love and faith, even amid all-but-hopelessness, and issuing in the heartbroken cry, “I deserve it, Lord; I deserve it; yet let me not be separated from Thee for ever!” In Jesus it was the pure Agony of a Soul, Which had ever loved with love, such as none but that God-united Soul could love with, Which had ever been loved with that Divine Complacency expressed by the words, “This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased.” Complacency, which could rest on no being, out of, and yet not out of, the Holy Trinity, as it rested on that Humanity which was co-united with God the Son. There was still the full knowledge of His love of God; there, that all-but-Infinite love, to which all possible love of all possible creatures collectively was as nothing, still gushed forth to the Infinite Love of God, and, the black cloud³⁷ of all our sins came between. God could not console Him, for it was to be borne for us; the Godhead of the Son, with Which that forsaken Manhood was inseparably united, seemed apart. Where was He? Who was He? He had no personal Being, save in God the Son. What was to become of that Manhood? Was it to be dissolved? But It could not cease to be. Was It to be separated? But It was to return to the Father. *We* seem to be separated from God; Jesus seemed to be rent asunder from Himself, and that, for love of us and of those for whom we pray. O Love Divine, how can it be, that Thou art so little loved, so hated by some, so forgotten by the many, so jostled out and thrust into corners, to dwell in Lazarus’ heart? O what an office Thou hast given us to pray, that those, who love Thee not, may know what Thy love towards them is, and may return Thee the renewed love of their whole souls for all Thine Infinite Love!

³⁵ St. Matt. xxvii. 46.

³⁶ St. Luke xxiii. 41.

³⁷ Lam. iii. 44.