

CHAPTER XXII

How Jesus our Savior was Crucified on Mount Calvary; the Seven Words Spoken by Him on the Cross; and how His Mother, Most Holy Mary, Accompanied Him with Great Sorrow.

664. Our Savior, the new and true Isaac, the Son of the eternal Father, arrived at the mountain of sacrifice, which is the same one to which Isaac, his prototype and figure, was brought by the patriarch Abraham (Gen. 22:9). Upon the most innocent Lamb of God was to be executed the rigor of the sentence which had been suspended in favor of the son of the Patriarch. Mount Calvary was held to be a place of defilement and ignominy as being reserved for the chastisement of condemned criminals, whose cadavers spread their stench around it and attached to it a still more evil fame. Our most loving Jesus arrived at its summit so worn out, wounded, torn and disfigured, that He seemed altogether transformed into an object of pain and sorrows. The power of the Divinity, which deified his most holy humanity by the hypostatic union, did not help Him to lighten his pains, but rather to strengthen Him against death, that still retaining life until death would be permitted to take it away on the Cross He could satiate his love to the fullest extent. The sorrowful and afflicted Mother, filled with bitterness, also arrived at the summit of Calvary and remained very close to her divine Son; but in the sorrows of her soul She was as it were beside Herself, being entirely transformed by her love and by what She suffered. With Her were St. John and the three Marys, for they alone, through her intercession and the favor of the eternal Father, had obtained the privilege of remaining so constantly near the Savior and his Cross.

665. When the most prudent Mother perceived that now the mysteries of the Redemption were to be fulfilled and the executioners were about to strip the Lord of his clothes for crucifixion, She turned in spirit to the eternal Father and prayed as follows: "My Lord and eternal God, Thou art the Father of thy onlybegotten Son. By eternal generation He is engendered, true God of true God, namely Thyself, and as man He was born from my womb and received from me this human nature in which He now suffers. I have nursed and sustained Him at my own breast, and as the best of sons who could ever be born of any creature I love Him with maternal love. As his Mother I have a natural right in the Person of his most holy humanity, and never shall thy providence deny a right to one who possesses it and to whom it belongs. This right of a Mother I now yield to Thee and once more place into thy hands thy and my Son as a sacrifice for the Redemption of man. Accept, my Lord, this pleasing offering, since this is more than I could ever offer by submitting my own self to be sacrificed and to suffer. This sacrifice is greater not only because my Son is true God of thy own substance, but because this sacrifice costs me a much greater sorrow and pain, for if the lots were exchanged and I would be permitted to die in order to preserve his most holy life, I would consider it a great relief and the fulfillment of my dearest desires." The eternal Father received this prayer of the exalted Queen with ineffable pleasure and complacency. The patriarch Abraham was permitted to go no further than to prefigure and attempt the sacrifice of a son (Gen. 22:12), because the real execution of such a sacrifice God reserved to Himself and to his Onlybegotten. Nor was Sara, the mother of Isaac, informed of the mystical ceremony, this being prevented not only by the prompt obedience of Abraham, but also because he could not rely upon the maternal love of Sara, who perhaps might have tried to impede the command of the Lord, though she was a just and holy woman. But it was not so with most holy Mary, to whom the eternal Father could manifest without reserve his unchangeable

will so She could, as far as her powers were concerned, unite with Him in the sacrifice of his Onlybegotten.

666. The invincible Mother finished her prayer and perceived that the impious executioners were preparing to give the Lord the drink of wine, myrrh and gall of which St. Matthew and St. Mark speak (Mt. 27:34; Mk. 15:23). In order to add this new torment to our Savior, the Jews took occasion of the custom in which those condemned to death were given a drink of strong and aromatic wine in order to raise their vital spirits and help them to bear their torments with greater fortitude, deriving this act of mercy from the words of Solomon written in the book of Proverbs (31:6): *Give strong drink to those who are sad, and wine to those who suffer bitterness of heart.* This custom they now perverted in order to augment the sufferings of the Savior. The drink which was intended to assist and strengthen other criminals was now mixed with gall* by the perfidy of the Jews so it would have no other effect than to torment his sense of taste by its bitterness. The divine Mother was aware of this inhuman cruelty, and with maternal compassion and tears She prayed to the Lord, beseeching Him not to drink it. His Majesty, condescending to the petition of his Mother, and without rejecting entirely this new suffering, tasted the mixture but would not drink it entirely (Mt. 27:34).

667. It was already the sixth hour, which corresponds to our noontime, and the executioners, intending to crucify the Savior naked, despoiled Him of the seamless tunic and his garments. Since the tunic was large and seamless they stripped Him by pulling it over his head without taking off the crown of thorns, and by the violence with which they proceeded they inhumanly tore off the crown with the tunic. Thus they opened anew all the wounds of his head, and in some of them remained the thorns, which in spite of their being so hard and sharp were wrenched off by the violence with which the executioners despoiled Him of his tunic and with it the crown. With heartless cruelty they again forced it down upon his sacred head, opening up wounds upon wounds. By the rude tearing off of the tunic were renewed also the wounds of his whole body, since the tunic had dried into the open places and its removal was, as David says, adding new pains to his wounds (Ps. 68:27). Four times during the Passion did they despoil our Lord and our Good of his garments and again vest Him: The first time in order to scourge Him at the pillar; the second time in order to clothe Him in the mock purple; the third when they took this off in order to clothe Him in his tunic; and the fourth when they finally took away his clothes. This last was the most painful because his wounds were more numerous, his holy humanity was much weakened, and there was less shelter against the sharp wind on mount Calvary, for also this element was permitted to afflict Him at his death by the inclemency of its cold blasts.

668. To all these sufferings was added the sorrow of being bereft of his garments in the presence of his Blessed Mother, of her pious companions, and in full sight of the multitudes gathered around. By his power He reserved for Himself only the loincloth with which his most holy Mother had wound underneath his tunic in Egypt, for neither at the scourging nor at the crucifixion could the executioners remove it, and He was laid in the sepulchre still covered with this cloth. That this really happened has been revealed to me many times (627). Certainly He desired to die in the greatest poverty and take with Him nothing of all He had created and possessed in this world. He would gladly have died entirely despoiled and bereft of even this covering had it not been for the desires and prayers of his most holy Mother to which Christ desired to yield.† On her account He substituted this most perfect obedience of a Son toward his

* cf. Ps. 68:22 [Ed.]

† cf. *Incarnation* 686 [Ed.]

Mother for extreme poverty at his death. The Holy Cross was lying on the ground and the executioners were busy making the necessary preparations for crucifying Him and the two thieves. In the interim our Redeemer and Master prayed to the Father and said:

669. “Eternal Father and my Lord God, to thy incomprehensible Majesty of infinite goodness and justice I offer my entire humanity and the works I have accomplished in it according to thy most holy will, having descended from thy bosom to assume passible and mortal flesh in order to redeem in it men, my brethren. I offer Thee, Lord, with Myself my most loving Mother, her love, her most perfect works, her sorrows, her sufferings, her cares and most prudent solicitude in serving Me, imitating Me, and accompanying Me unto death. I offer Thee the little flock of my Apostles, the holy Church, and the congregation of the faithful such as it is now and as it shall be to the end of the world, and with them I offer to Thee all the mortal children of Adam. All this I place in thy hands as the true God and omnipotent Lord. On my part I willingly suffer and die for all, desiring by my death for all to be saved, if all shall follow Me and profit from my Redemption, so from the slavery of the demon they pass to become thy children, my brethren and coheirs by the grace I have merited and left for them. Especially, my Lord, do I offer to Thee the poor, despised and afflicted, who are my friends and who follow Me on the Way of the Cross. I desire the just and the predestined to be written in thy eternal memory. I beseech Thee, my Father, to withhold thy chastisement and raise not the scourge of thy justice over men, and let them not be punished as they merit for their sins; from this hour be their Father as Thou art mine. I likewise beseech Thee for those who with pious affection accompany Me in my death, that they may be enlightened by thy divine light, and for all who are persecuting Me so they may be converted to the truth. Above all I ask Thee for the exaltation of thy ineffable and holy Name.”

670. This prayer and these supplications of our Savior Jesus were known to his most holy Mother, and She imitated Him and made the same petitions to the eternal Father insofar as She was concerned. The most prudent Virgin never forgot or disregarded the first words which She heard from the mouth of her divine Son as a newborn: “Become like unto Me, my Beloved” (*Inc.* 480). He continually fulfilled his promise that in return for the new human existence which She had given Him in her virginal womb He would by his almighty power give Her a new existence of divine and eminent grace above all other creatures. To this favor pertained the knowledge and most exalted enlightenment by which the great Lady knew all the operations of the most holy humanity of her Son, without anything being concealed or hidden from her view. Whatever She thus perceived She imitated, and thus She was always most careful to study and penetrate them with deep understanding, put them promptly into action, and practice them courageously and zealously during her whole life. In this neither sorrow could disturb Her, nor anguish hinder Her, nor persecution detain Her, nor the bitterness of her sufferings weaken Her. If the great Queen had assisted at the Passion with the same sentiments as the rest of the just it would indeed have been admirable, but not as admirable as the way in which She suffered. She was singular and extraordinary in all her sufferings, for as I have said above She felt in her own virginal body all the torments of Christ our Lord, both interior and exterior (508, 553, 563, 576, 630). Because of this conformity we can say the heavenly Mother was also scourged, crowned with thorns, spit upon, struck, laden with the Cross, and nailed upon it, for She felt these pains and all the rest in her most pure body. Although She felt them in a different manner, yet it was with the highest similarity, so in all things the Mother was the living portrait of her Son. And besides the grandeur of this correspondence of most holy Mary and her dignity to that of Christ, which was with all possible proportion, there was enclosed in this wonder another mystery, which was to gratify in a certain way the love of Christ and his supereminent Passion and good pleasure by

having his entire Passion copied in some mere creature, and no one possessed such a right to this benefit more than his own Mother.

671. In order to find the places for the auger holes on the Cross, the executioners with imperious arrogance commanded the Creator of the universe (O dreadful temerity!) to stretch Himself out upon it. The Teacher of humility obeyed without hesitation. But they, following their inhuman instinct of cruelty, marked the places for the holes not according to the size of his body, but farther apart, having in mind a new torture for their Victim. This inhuman intent was known to the Mother of light, and the knowledge of it was one of the greatest afflictions of her most chaste Heart during the whole Passion. She saw through the intentions of these ministers of sin and anticipated the torments to be endured by her beloved Son when his limbs would be wrenched from their sockets in being nailed to the Cross;* yet She could not do anything to prevent it since it was the will of the Lord to suffer these pains for men. When He rose from the Cross and they set about boring the holes, the great Lady approached and took hold of one of his hands, adoring Him and kissing it with the greatest reverence. The executioners allowed this because they thought the sight of his Mother would cause so much the greater affliction to the Lord, for they wished to spare Him no sorrow they could cause Him. But they were ignorant of such hidden mysteries, for the Lord during his Passion had no greater source of consolation and interior joy than to see in the soul of his Blessed Mother the beautiful likeness of Himself and the full fruits of his Passion and Death. This joy, to a certain extent, comforted Christ our Lord also in that hour.

672. Having bored the three holes into the Cross, the executioners again commanded Christ the Lord to stretch Himself out upon it in order to be nailed to it. As the Author of patience the supreme and almighty King obeyed, and at the will of the hangmen placed Himself with outstretched arms upon the blessed wood. The Lord was so weakened, disfigured and exhausted that if the ferocious cruelty of those men had left the least room for natural reason and kindness they could not have brought themselves to inflict further torments upon the innocent and meek Lamb humbly suffering such nameless sorrows and pains. But not so with them, for the Jews and their ministers (O terrible and most hidden judgments of the Lord!) were transformed by the mortal hatred and evil will of the demons, devoid of the feelings of sensible and earthly men and urged on only by diabolical wrath and fury.

673. Presently one of the executioners seized the hand of Jesus our Savior and placed it upon the auger hole, while another hammered a large and rough nail through the palm. The veins and sinews were torn, and the bones of the sacred hand, which made the heavens and all that exists, were forced apart. When they stretched out the other hand they found it did not reach the auger hole, for the sinews of the other arm had been shortened, and the executioners had maliciously set the holes too far apart as I mentioned above. In order to overcome the difficulty they took the chain with which the Savior had been bound in the garden, and looping one end through a ring around his wrist, they with unheard-of cruelty pulled the hand over the hole and fastened it with another nail. Thereupon they seized his feet, and placing them one above the other they tied the same chain around both and stretched them with barbarous ferocity down to the third hole. Then they drove through both feet a large nail into the Cross. Thus his sacred body, in which dwelled the Divinity, was nailed motionless to the Holy Cross, and the handiwork of his deified members, formed by the Holy Ghost, was so stretched and torn asunder that the bones of his body, dislocated and forced from their natural position, could all be counted (Ps. 21:18). The

* cf. Ps. 21:15, 18 [Ed.]

bones of his breast, of his shoulders and arms, and of his whole body yielded to the cruel violence and were torn from their sinews.

674. It is impossible for human tongue or discourse to describe the torments of our Savior Jesus and what He suffered on this occasion; only on Judgment Day shall more be made known, in order to justify his cause against the reprobate, and so the saints may worthily praise and glorify Him. But at present, while our faith in this truth gives us occasion and obliges us to apply our reason (if such we possess), I ask, implore and beseech the children of the holy Church, each one for himself, to study this most venerable sacrament. Let us contemplate it and weigh it with all its circumstances, and we shall find powerful motives to abhor sin and firmly resolve to avoid it as the cause of all this suffering to the Author of life. Let us contemplate and look upon his Virgin Mother, so afflicted in spirit and overwhelmed by the torments of her most pure body, so through this gate of light we may enter and recognize the sun which illumines the heart. O Lady and Queen of virtues! O true Mother of the immortal King of ages become man! It is true, O my Lady, that the hardness of our ungrateful hearts makes us very unfit and unworthy of suffering thy pains and those of thy most holy Son our Lord; yet through thy clemency make us partakers of this favor which we do not deserve. Purify and free us from this deadening lukewarmness and gross neglect. If we are the cause of these sufferings, what propriety or what justice can there be in visiting them only on Thee and on thy Beloved? Let the chalice pass from the lips of the Innocent so it can be tasted by the guilty who deserve it. But alas! Where is our good sense? Where is wisdom and knowledge? Where is the light of our eyes? Who has so entirely deprived us of our understanding? Who has robbed us of our human and sensible hearts? If I, O Lord, had not received from Thee this being according to thy image and likeness (Wis. 2:23), if Thou hadst not given me life and motion (Acts 17:28), if all the elements and creatures formed by thy hand for my service (Ecclus. 39:30) were not giving me continual notice of thy immense love, at least thy being nailed so outrageously to the Cross, and all thy torments and sorrows for my salvation, should suffice to draw me to Thee with the bonds of compassion, gratitude, love, and confidence in thy ineffable kindness. But if so many voices cannot awaken me, if such love does not enkindle mine, if thy Passion and Death do not move me, and if such great benefits cannot oblige me, what end must I expect as the result of my stupidity?

675. After the Savior was nailed to the Cross the executioners judged it necessary to bend the points of the nails which projected through the back of the wood so they might not be loosened and drawn out by the weight of the body. For this purpose they raised up the Cross in order to turn it over so the body of the Lord would rest face down upon the ground with the weight of the Cross upon Him. This new cruelty appalled all the bystanders and a shout of pity arose in the crowd. But the sorrowful and compassionate Mother intervened by her prayers and asked the eternal Father not to permit this boundless outrage to happen in the way the executioners intended. She commanded her holy Angels to come to the assistance of their Creator; therefore, when the executioners raised up the Cross to let it fall with the crucified Lord face down upon the ground, the holy Angels supported Him and the Cross above the stony and fetid ground, and thus his divine countenance did not come in contact with the rocks and pebbles. Then the executioners bent over the points of the nails, though altogether ignorant of the miracle, for the sacred body was so near to the ground, and the Cross was so firmly held by the Angels, that the malicious Jews thought it rested upon the hard rock.

676. Then they dragged the lower end of the Cross with the crucified God near to the hole wherein it was to be planted. Some of them getting under the upper part of the Cross with their shoulders, others pushing upward with their halberds and lances, they raised the Savior on his

Cross and fastened its foot in the hole they had drilled into the ground. Thus our true life and salvation now hung in the air upon the sacred wood in full view of the innumerable multitudes of different nations and countries. I must not omit mentioning another barbarity inflicted upon the Lord as they raised Him, for some of them placed the sharp points of their lances and halberds to his body, fearfully lacerating Him under the armpits in helping to push the Cross into position. At this spectacle arose anew the voices of the people in greater shouts and confusion: The Jews blasphemed, the kindhearted lamented, and the strangers were astounded; some of them as well as others called the attention of the bystanders to the proceedings, while others could not look upon Christ crucified due to the pain they felt; some pondered the warning given by such a punishment inflicted on someone else, while still others proclaimed Him a just man; and this entire variety of judgments and sentiments were like arrows piercing the Heart of the afflicted Mother. The sacred body now shed much blood from the nail wounds, which had widened by the weight of the body and the shock of the Cross falling into the hole. They were the fountains, now opened up, to which Isaias invites us to hasten with joy to quench our thirst and wash off the stains of our sins (Is. 12:3). No one shall be excused who does not quickly approach to drink these waters, since they are sold without exchange of silver or gold, and they are given freely to those who will but receive them (Is. 55:1).

677. Then the executioners crucified also the two thieves and planted their crosses to the right and the left of the Savior, for thereby they wished to indicate He deserved the most conspicuous place as being the greatest evildoer. The Pharisees and priests, forgetting the two thieves, turned all the venom of their fury against the Sinless and Saint by nature. Wagging their heads in scorn and mockery (Mt. 27:39) they threw stones and dirt at the Cross of the Lord and his royal Person, saying (Ib. 40, 42): *Vah, Thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it, save thy own self; He saved others, Himself He cannot save.* Others said (Ib.): *If this be the Son of God, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him.* The two thieves in the beginning also mocked the Lord and said: “If Thou art the Son of God, *save Thyself and us*” (Ib. 44; Lk. 23:39). These blasphemies of the thieves caused especially great sorrow to the Lord since they were so near to death and were losing the fruit of their death pains by which they could have satisfied in part for their justly punished crimes; however, soon after one of them availed himself of the greatest opportunity a sinner ever had in this world and was converted from his sins.

678. When the great Queen of the Angels, most holy Mary, perceived that the Jews in their perfidy and obstinate envy vied in dishonoring Him, in blaspheming Him as the most wicked of men, and in desiring to blot out his name from the land of the living as Jeremias had prophesied (Jer. 11:19), She was inflamed with new zeal for the honor of her Son and true God. Prostrate before his royal Person crucified (where She had been adoring Him), She asked the eternal Father to provide for the honor of his Onlybegotten, and manifest it by such evident signs that the perfidy of the Jews would be confounded and their malicious intentions frustrated. Having presented this petition to the Father, She addressed all the irrational creatures with the zeal and authority of the Queen of the universe and said: “Insensible creatures, created by the hand of the Almighty, do thou manifest the sorrow which at his death is denied to Him so foolishly by men capable of reason. Ye heavens, thou sun and moon, and ye stars and planets, stop thy course and suspend thy activity in regard to mortals. Ye elements, change thy condition; earth, lose thy stability, let thy rocks and cliffs be rent. Ye sepulchres and monuments of the dead, open and send forth the dead from thy hidden shelters for the confusion of the living. Thou mystical and figurative veil of the temple, divide into two parts, and by thy separation threaten the unbelievers

with chastisement, and testify to the truth and to the glory of their Creator and Redeemer which they are trying to obscure.”

679. In virtue of this prayer and the commands of Mary, the Mother of the Crucified, the omnipotence of the Most High provided for all that was to happen at the death of his Onlybegotten. The Lord enlightened and moved the hearts of many of the bystanders at the time of these happenings on earth, and even before that time, so they could confess Jesus crucified as holy, just, and the true Son of God; for example, this happened with the centurion and many others mentioned in the Gospels, who went away from Calvary striking their breasts in sorrow (Mt. 27:54; Lk. 23:48). Among them were not only those who previously had heard and believed his doctrine, but also a great number who had never seen Him or witnessed his miracles. By the same prayer Pilate was also inspired not to change the title of the Cross which already had been placed over the head of the Savior in the three languages of Hebrew, Greek and Latin; for though the Jews protested and asked him not to write “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews,” but rather “this one says, He is King of the Jews,” Pilate answered: *What I have written, I have written*, and I do not wish it to be changed (Jn. 19:21-2). All the inanimate creatures, by the divine will, obeyed the command of most holy Mary. From the noon hour until three o’clock in the afternoon (which was called the ninth hour) when the Lord expired they exhibited the great disturbances and changes mentioned in the Gospels: The sun hid its light, the planets showed great alterations, the earth quaked, many mountains were rent, the rocks shook one against the other, and the graves opened and sent forth some of the dead alive (Mt. 27:51-2; Lk. 23:45). So new and incredible were the elementary alterations of the whole visible universe that they were felt throughout the entire earth (Mt. 27:45; Mk. 15:33; Lk. 23:44). The Jews throughout Jerusalem were amazed and astonished, though their unheard-of perfidy and malice prevented and made them unworthy of understanding the truth which all the insensible creatures preached to them.

680. The soldiers who had crucified Jesus our Savior, according to a custom permitting the executioners to take possession of the property of those whom they executed, now proceeded to divide the garments of the innocent Lamb. The cloak or outside mantle, which by divine disposition they had brought to mount Calvary (and which was the one Christ had laid aside at the washing of the feet), they divided among themselves, cutting it into four parts (Jn. 19:23). But the seamless tunic, being thus ordained by the providence of the Lord with great mystery, they did not divide, but rather cast lots over it and assigned it entirely to the one who drew the lot for it, thus fulfilling the prophecy of David in Psalm XXI (v. 19). The mysterious signification of the undivided tunic is variously explained by the Saints and Doctors, one of these explanations being that although the Jews lacerated and tore with wounds the sacred humanity of Christ our Lord, yet they could not touch or injure the Divinity which was enclosed in the sacred humanity, and whoever would obtain the lot of justification by partaking of his divinity would thenceforward possess and enjoy it entirely.

681. Since the wood of the Cross was the throne of His Majesty and the chair of the doctrine of life, and as He was now raised upon it confirming his doctrine by his example, Christ now uttered his *first word* on the Cross, words of highest charity and perfection: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do* (Lk. 23:34). This principle of charity and fraternal love the divine Teacher had appropriated to Himself and proclaimed by his own lips (Jn. 15:12; Mt. 5:44); He now confirmed and executed it upon the Cross, not only loving and pardoning his enemies, but excusing by their very ignorance those whose malice had reached the highest point possible to

men in persecuting, blaspheming and crucifying their God and Redeemer.* Such was the difference between the behavior of ungrateful men favored with such great enlightenment, instruction and blessing, and the behavior of our Savior Jesus in his most burning charity while suffering the crown of thorns, the nails, the Cross, and unheard-of blasphemy at the hands of men. O incomprehensible love! O ineffable sweetness! O patience inconceivable to man, admirable to the angels, and fearful to the demons! One of the two thieves, called Dismas, perceived something of this sacrament of mercy and forgiveness, and most holy Mary at the same time working to intercede and pray for him, he was interiorly enlightened in order to recognize his Redeemer and Master by this first word spoken by Christ on the Cross. Moved by true sorrow and contrition for his sins, he turned to his companion and said (Lk. 23:40-1): *Neither dost thou fear God, who with these blasphemies perseveres in the same condition? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man, who suffers with us, hath done no evil.* And then speaking to our Savior he said: *Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into thy kingdom* (Ib. 42).

682. In this happiest of thieves, in the centurion, and in the others who confessed Jesus Christ on the Cross, began to appear the results of the Redemption. But the one most favored was this Dismas, who merited to hear the *second word* of the Savior on the Cross: *Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in paradise* (Ib. 43). O fortunate thief, who of all others heard those words so much desired by all the saints and just of the earth! Such a word the ancient Patriarchs and Prophets did not hear; they judged themselves very happy to be allowed to descend into limbo and wait through the long ages for paradise, which thou in changing so happily thy condition didst acquire in one moment. Thou hast now ceased to rob earthly possessions of thy neighbor, and immediately snatchest heaven from the hands of thy Master. Thou dost seize it in justice and He yields it to thee in grace, since thou wast the last disciple of his doctrine on earth and the most alert of all in practicing it after having heard it from his mouth. Thou hast lovingly corrected thy brother, confessed thy Creator, reprehended those who blasphemed Him, imitated Him in patient suffering, and asked Him humbly as thy Redeemer not to forget thy miseries; and He, as thy Exalter, has at once fulfilled thy desires without delaying the reward merited for thee and all mortals.

683. Having thus justified the good thief, Jesus turned his loving gaze upon his afflicted Mother, who with St. John was standing at the foot of the Cross. Speaking to both his *third word*, He first addressed his Mother, saying: *Woman, behold thy son*; and then to the Apostle: *Behold thy Mother* (Jn. 19:26-7). The Lord called Her Woman and not Mother because this name of Mother had in it something of sweetness and consolation, the very pronouncing of which would have been a sensible relief; but during his Passion He would admit no exterior consolation, having renounced for that time all exterior alleviation and easement, as I have mentioned above (249). By this word *Woman* he tacitly and by implication said: Woman blessed among all women (Lk. 1:42), the most prudent among all the daughters of Adam, Woman strong and constant (Prov. 31:10ff.), unconquered by any fault of thy own, unailing in my service and most faithful in thy love toward Me, which even the mighty waters of my Passion could not extinguish or oppose (Cant. 8:7), I am going to my Father and cannot accompany Thee further. My beloved disciple shall attend upon Thee and serve Thee as his Mother, and he shall be thy son. All this the heavenly Queen understood. The holy Apostle on his part received Her as his own from that hour on, for he was enlightened anew in order to understand and appreciate the greatest treasure

* cf. Jn. 8:50; 16:7-11 [Ed.]

of the Divinity in all of creation next to the humanity of Christ our Savior. In this light he revered and served Her for the rest of her life, as I shall relate farther on (744; *Cor.* 175, 369, etc.). Our Lady also accepted him as her son in humble subjection and obedience. She then and there promised him this obedience, without allowing the immense sorrow of the Passion to hinder her magnanimous and most prudent Heart, always practicing the highest perfection and holiness without omitting any act of virtue possible to Her.

684. Already the ninth hour of the day was approaching, although the darkness and confusion of nature made it appear to be rather a chaotic night. Our Savior spoke the *fourth word* from the Cross in a loud and strong voice so all the bystanders could hear it (Mt. 27:46): *My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?* Although the Lord spoke these words in his own Hebrew language they were not understood by all. Since they began with *Eli, Eli*, some of them thought He was calling upon Elias, and a number of them mocked Him saying: "*Let us see whether Elias will come to free Him from our hands*" (Ib. 49). But the mystery concealed beneath these words of Christ our Good was just as profound as it was unintelligible to the Jews and gentiles, and they have been interpreted in many ways by the holy Doctors of the Church. I shall give the interpretation which has been manifested to me. The dereliction of which Christ speaks was not one in which the Divinity separated from the humanity, dissolving the hypostatic union, nor included a cessation of the beatific vision in his soul; for both of these He possessed and could never lose from the instant in which, by the work of the Holy Ghost, He was conceived in the virginal bridal-chamber. This is the true and Catholic doctrine. While it is also certain that his most holy humanity was forsaken by the Divinity in not being defended from death and the sorrows of his most bitter Passion, on the other hand the eternal Father did not forsake Him entirely regarding the restoration of the honor of his Son, since the Father demonstrated his sentiments by causing the changes in the visible creation in order to give testimony to his honor at his death. Christ our Savior intimated quite a different dereliction by these words of complaint, one which originated from his immense love for men, namely from his love of the foreknown and the reprobate which during his last hour caused in Him the same anguish as it did during his prayer in the garden (499). He grieved that his copious and superabundant Redemption, offered for the whole human race, would not be efficacious in the reprobate, and that He would find Himself deprived of them in the eternal happiness for which He had created and redeemed them. As this was to happen in consequence of the decree of the eternal will of his Father, He lovingly and sorrowfully complained of it in the words *my God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*, that is, insofar as God deprived Him of the salvation of the reprobate.

685. In greater testimony of this desire the Lord added his *fifth word* and said: *I thirst* (Jn. 19:28). The sufferings of Christ our Good and his anguish could easily cause a natural thirst, but for Him this was not the time to complain of this thirst or to quench it, and therefore His Majesty would not have spoken of it so near to its expiration unless it was in order to give expression to a most exalted mystery. He was thirsting to see the captive children of Adam make use of the liberty which He merited for them and offered to them, and which so many were abusing; thirsting eagerly and solicitously for all to correspond with Him in the faith and love due to Him, that they profit by his merits and sufferings, accept his friendship and grace now acquired for them, and not lose the eternal happiness which He would leave as an inheritance for those who desired to merit and accept it. This was the thirst of our Savior and Master, and only Mary most holy understood it perfectly and began with ardent affection and charity to invite and interiorly call upon all the poor, the afflicted, the humble, the despised, and the downtrodden to approach their Savior and thus quench his thirst at least in part, since it was not possible to quench it

entirely. But the perfidious Jews and the executioners, in testimony of their unhappy hardness of heart, fastened a sponge soaked in gall and vinegar to a reed and mockingly raised it to his mouth so He might drink of it (Jn. 19:29). Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of David: *In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink* (Ps. 68:22). Our most patient Savior tasted it, partaking of this drink in mysterious submission to the condemnation of the reprobate, but at the petition of his Blessed Mother He immediately desisted, because the Mother of Grace was to be the portal and Mediatrix of those who were to profit by the Passion and the Redemption of mankind.

686. In connection with this same mystery the Savior then pronounced the *sixth word* (Jn. 19:30): *Consummatum est (it is consummated)*. Now is consummated this work of my coming from heaven, and I have obeyed the command of my eternal Father who sent Me to suffer and die for the salvation of men; now are fulfilled the Holy Scriptures, the prophecies and figures of the Old Testament, and the course of my earthly and mortal life assumed in the womb of my Mother; now are established on earth my example, my doctrines, my Sacraments, and my remedies for the sickness of sin; now is appeased the justice of my eternal Father in regard to the debt of the children of Adam; now is my holy Church enriched with the remedies for the sins committed by men. The whole work of my coming into the world is perfected insofar as concerns Me, its Restorer, and the secure foundation of the Church Triumphant is now laid in the Church Militant, so nothing can overthrow or change it. These are the mysteries contained in the brief words: *Consummatum est*.

687. Consequent upon having finished and established the work of human Redemption in its ultimate perfection, it followed that just as the incarnate Word came forth from the Father to enter mortal life (Jn. 16:28), by the death of this life He return to the Father with immortality. Therefore Christ our Savior added the *seventh word*, the last words He spoke from the Cross: *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit* (Lk. 23:46). The Lord spoke these words in a loud and strong voice so the bystanders heard them. In pronouncing them He raised his eyes to heaven as one speaking with the eternal Father, and with the last syllable He gave up his spirit and inclined his head. By the divine force of these words Lucifer with all his demons were hurled into the deepest caverns of hell where they lay motionless, as I shall relate in the next chapter. The invincible Queen and Mistress of all virtues understood these mysteries beyond the understanding of all creatures, since She was the Mother of the Savior and the Coadjatrix of his Passion. In order to participate in it to the end, just as She had felt in her own body the other torments of her Son She now, though remaining alive, felt and suffered the pangs and agony of his death. She did not die in reality,* but this was because God miraculously preserved her life when according to the natural course death should have ensued. This miraculous aid was more wonderful than all the other favors She received during the Passion, for this last pain was more intense and penetrating. All that the martyrs and men sentenced to death have suffered from the beginning of the world cannot equal what most holy Mary suffered during the Passion. In return for this ultimate sorrow the little which remained of this earthly life, and which the most pure Mother still felt, in a special manner was more than ever spiritualized. The great Lady remained at the foot of the Cross until evening when the sacred body (as I shall relate) was buried.

688. The holy Evangelists make no mention of many of the sacraments and mysteries connected with the doings of Christ our Savior on the Cross, and we as Catholics can only form prudent conjectures founded upon the infallible certainty of our faith. But among those which have been manifested to me in this History, and concerning this part of the Passion, is a prayer

* cf. *Communion* v. and v. 5 of Vesper Hymn *Jam toto*, Sept. 15, Feast of the Seven Sorrows of the BVM [Ed.]

which Christ addressed to his eternal Father before speaking the seven words on the Cross recorded by the Evangelists. I call it a prayer because it was addressed to the eternal Father, though it was in the manner of a last disposition or testament which He made as a true and most wise Father in order to consign his possessions to his family, that is, to the whole human race. Even natural reason teaches us that he who is the head of a family or the lord over many or few possessions would not be a prudent dispenser of his goods, and inattentive to his office or dignity, if at the hour of his death he would not make known his will in regard to the disposition of his goods and his estate so each one of his family could know what belongs to him and may possess it justly and peacefully without recourse to lawsuits. For this very reason, and so they can set their minds at ease in preparation for the hour of death, men of the world make their last testaments. And even religious thus divest themselves, because in that hour earthly matters and their cares weigh heavily on the soul and prevent it from rising toward its Creator. Although earthly things could not disturb our Savior, since He neither possessed them nor if He had possessed any could be hindered by them in his infinite power, yet it was appropriate for Him in that hour to dispose of the spiritual riches and treasures which He had amassed for mankind in the course of his earthly life.

689. Regarding these eternal goods the Savior made his testament on the Cross, distributing them and pointing out those who would be legitimate heirs and those who would be disinherited, mentioning the reasons for the one as well as the other. Conferring with his eternal Father, He did all this as the supreme Lord and most just Judge of all mortals, for in this testament are rehearsed the mysteries of the predestination of the saints and of the reprobation of the foreknown. It was a testament hidden and sealed for mankind; only most holy Mary understood it, because in addition to knowing clearly all the operations of the most holy soul of Christ, She was the universal Heiress of all creation, constituted as Mistress of all created things. As the Coadjatrix of the Redemption She was also to be the testamentary Executrix through whose hands He was to execute his will (since into her hands her Son placed all things, just as the Father had placed all things into his hands [Jn. 13:3]); moreover, this great Lady was to distribute the treasures acquired and owing to her Son because of who He is and because of his infinite merits. This understanding has been given to me as part of this History in order to declare more fully the dignity of our Queen, and so sinners can approach Her as the Depositary of all the treasures gained by her Son and our Redeemer in the sight of his eternal Father. All help and assistance is in the hands of most holy Mary, and She is to distribute it according to her most sweet kindness and liberality.

*TESTAMENT MADE BY CHRIST OUR SAVIOR, PRAYING
TO HIS ETERNAL FATHER FROM THE CROSS.*

690. When the holy wood of the Cross had been raised on mount Calvary, bearing aloft with it the incarnate Word crucified, before speaking any of the seven last words, Christ prayed interiorly to his heavenly Father and said: “My Father and eternal God, I confess and exalt Thee from this tree of my Cross, and I praise Thee with the sacrifice of my sorrows, Passion and Death; for by the hypostatic union with the divine nature Thou hast raised my humanity to the supreme dignity, that of Christ, the Godman, anointed with thy own divinity. I confess Thee for the plenitude of all possible gifts of grace and glory which from the instant of my Incarnation Thou hast communicated to my humanity, and because from all eternity up to this present hour Thou hast given Me full universal dominion of all creatures in the order of grace and of nature.

Thou hast made Me the Lord of the heavens and of the elements (Mt. 28:18), of the sun, moon, and stars; of fire, of air, of the earth and the seas, and of all the sensible and insensible creatures which live in them; of the disposition of the times, of the days and nights, giving Me dominion and power over all according to my will and disposition. Thou hast made Me the Head, the King, and the Lord of all angels and men (Eph. 1:21), to govern and command them, to reward the good and punish the wicked (Jn. 5:22). Thou hast given Me power over all things and the keys of the abyss (Apoc. 20:1), from the highest heaven to the deepest abysses of hell. Thou hast placed into my hands the eternal justification of men, their empires, kingdoms and principalities, the great and the little, the poor and the rich; of all who are capable of thy grace and glory Thou hast made Me the Justifier, Redeemer and Glorifier, the universal Lord of the entire human race (I Cor. 1:30), of life and death, of all those who come into this world, of the holy Church, its treasures, Scriptures, mysteries, Sacraments, helps, laws, and gifts of grace. All of this hast Thou, my Father, given into my hands and subjected to my will and disposition, and for this I praise and exalt Thee, I confess and magnify Thee.

691. “Now, Lord and eternal Father, when I am returning from this world to thy right hand by means of my Death on the Cross, and by my Passion and Death have fulfilled the Redemption of men which Thou didst entrust to Me, I desire, my God, that this same Cross be the tribunal of our justice and mercy, and being nailed upon it I desire to judge those for whom I give my life; and justifying my cause I desire to dispense and arrange the treasures of my coming into the world and of my Passion and Death, so from this hour shall remain established what belongs to each one of the just and the reprobate according to their works* by which I have been loved or hated.† I have sought all mortals and called them to my friendship and grace, and from the instant in which I took human flesh I have ceaselessly labored for them. I have suffered inconveniences, fatigues, affronts, ignominies, reproaches, scourges, a crown of thorns, and now suffer the most bitter death of the Cross; I have implored for all of them thy immense kindness; I have prayed for them in vigils, fasted, and wandered about teaching them the way of eternal life. As far as my part and my will are concerned I have desired eternal happiness for all, just as I have merited it for all without exception or excluding anyone. I have set up and formed the law of grace for all; and the Church, in which salvation can be attained, shall always be stable and permanent.

692. “Yet by our knowledge and foresight We know, my God and Father, that due to the malice and rebellion of men not all desire our eternal salvation, nor avail themselves of our mercy and the way I have opened up for them by my life, works and death, but rather prefer to follow their sinful ways unto perdition. Thou art just, my Lord and Father, and most righteous are thy judgments (Ps. 118:137), and it is just Thou hast made Me the Judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:42), between the good and the bad, to give to the just the reward of having served and followed Me, and to sinners the chastisement of their perverse obstinacy; that the just have part with Me‡ in my goods, and sinners be deprived of my inheritance since they refuse to accept it. Now therefore, my eternal Father, in thy name and mine, for thy exaltation I decree my final testament according to my human will, which is conformable to thy eternal and divine will. I desire in the first place to name my most pure Mother, who gave Me human existence: I constitute Her as my sole and universal Heiress of all the goods of nature, grace and glory which

* cf. Mt. 16:27, 7:21; Job 34:11; Ps. 61:13; Prov. 12:14, 24:12; Eccclus. 16:12-13; Jn. 5:29; Rom. 2:6, 13; II Cor. 5:10; James 2:14-26; Apoc. 2:23, 20:12-13, 22:12 [Ed.]

† cf. Mt. 25:31-46 [Ed.]

‡ cf. Jn. 13:8 [Ed.]

are mine, so She can be Lady with full dominion over all. All the gifts of grace which She, being a mere creature, is capable of receiving I grant to Her with efficacy, and those of glory I promise Her in its time. I desire angels and men to be Hers, that She have entire dominion and Queenship over them, and that all obey and serve Her; that the demons fear Her and be subject to Her; that likewise all the irrational creatures, the heavens, stars and planets, the elements, and all the living creatures contained in them, the birds, fishes and animals be subject to Her; that all have Her as their Lady in order for all to hallow and glorify Her with Me. I likewise desire for Her to be the Depositary and Dispenser of all the goods contained in heaven and on earth. That which She ordains and disposes in the Church for my children among men shall be confirmed in heaven by the three divine Persons; and all She shall ask for mortals now, afterwards and forever We shall concede according to her will and disposition.

693. “To the angels who have obeyed thy holy and just will, I declare as theirs the highest heaven as their proper and eternal habitation, and in it the joy of the clear vision and fruition of our Divinity. I desire them to enjoy its everlasting possession together with our friendship and company. I command them to recognize my Mother as their legitimate Queen and Lady, that they serve, accompany, and attend upon Her, and bear Her up in their hands in all places and times, obeying Her reign and all that She desires to command and ordain. The demons, as rebellious to our perfect and holy will, I cast out and separate from our vision and company; anew do I condemn them to our abhorrence and eternal deprivation of our friendship and glory, and the vision of my Mother and of my friends, the saints and the just. I assign and designate for their everlasting habitation the place most remote from our royal throne, namely the infernal caverns, the center of the earth, deprived of light and containing the horror of sensible darkness (Jude 6). I declare this to be their portion and inheritance as chosen by them in their pride and obstinacy by which they rose up against the divine Being and his decrees. In those dungeons of obscurity they shall be tormented by everlasting and inextinguishable fire.

694. “From the whole human race, in the fullness of my entire will, I call, choose and select all the just and predestined, who through my grace shall be saved by imitating Me, accomplishing my will, and obeying my holy law. These in the first place, after my most pure Mother, I name as the inheritors of all my promises and mysteries, the blessings and treasures of my Sacraments, and the secrets of my Scriptures, since they are enclosed therein; of my humility and meekness of heart; of the virtues of faith, hope and charity; of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance; of my divine gifts and favors; of my cross, labors, reproaches and contempt, poverty and nakedness. This shall be their portion and inheritance in this present and mortal life; and since they must with good will choose this portion in order to labor well, and in order to undergo it with joy, I point it out to them as a pledge of my friendship, since I have chosen it for Myself. I offer them my protection and defense, my holy inspirations, my favors and powerful assistance, my gifts and justification, according to each one’s disposition and love.* For them I shall be a Father, a Brother, and a Friend, and they shall be my children (II Cor. 6:18), my elect and beloved; and since they are my children I name them as the inheritors of all my merits and treasures without any limitation on my part. I desire that in my holy Church they participate in and receive the Sacraments whenever they properly prepare themselves to receive them, and if they lose my grace and goods they shall be able to recover them and return to my friendship, renewed and copiously washed by my blood. All of them shall avail themselves of the intercession of my Mother and my saints, and She shall recognize them as her children, shielding

* cf. II Cor. 9:6-7 [Ed.]

them and holding them as her own. My angels shall defend them, guide them, act as their patrons, and bear them up in their hands lest they stumble (Ps. 90:11-12); and if they fall, they shall help them to rise.

695. “I likewise desire that my just and chosen ones be superior in excellence to the reprobate and the demons, and that my enemies fear them and be subject to them; that all the rational and irrational creatures serve them; that the heavens, the planets, and the stars preserve them and give them life by their influences; that the earth, its elements, and all of its animals sustain them; that all the creatures which are mine and serve Me be theirs and serve them as my children and friends (I Cor. 3:22; Wis. 16:24); and that their blessing be in *the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth* (Gen. 27:28). I also desire to hold with them my delights (Prov. 8:31), communicate to them my secrets, converse with them intimately, and live with them in the Church Militant here below in the species of bread and wine as an earnest and infallible pledge of the eternal happiness and glory promised to them, and of this eternal happiness I make them participants and heirs so with Me they shall enjoy it in heaven by perpetual possession and in rejoicing which cannot be lost.

696. “To the foreknown and reprobated by our will (though they were created for another much higher end) I assign and permit that their portion and inheritance in this mortal life shall be the concupiscence of the flesh and of the eyes, and pride with all its effects (I Jn. 2:16); that they eat and be satisfied with the sand* of the earth, namely riches, with the fumes and the corruption of the flesh and its delights, and with the vanity and presumption of the world. In order to acquire such possessions they have labored and employed all the diligence of their will and senses; in such occupations they have consumed their powers and the gifts and benefits We gave them; and they themselves have voluntarily chosen deceit, abhorring the truth I have taught them in my holy law (Rom. 2:8). They have renounced what I have written in their very hearts, and what I have inspired by my grace; they have despised my teachings and blessings, and listened to my and their own enemies; they have accepted their deceits, loved vanity (Ps. 4:3), wrought injustice, followed ambition, delighted in vengeance, persecuted the poor, humiliated the just, mocked the simple and the innocent, craved their own exaltation, and desired to be raised above all the cedars of Lebanon (Ps. 36:35) in the law of injustice which they have observed.

697. “Since they have done all this in opposition to the goodness of our Divinity, and remained obstinate in their malice, renouncing the rights of children which I have acquired for them, I disinherit them of my friendship and glory; and just as Abraham separated from himself the children of the slave, allotting them certain gifts, and reserving his principal inheritance for Isaac (Gen. 25:5), the son of the free woman Sarah, likewise I disinherit the foreknown from my inheritance by giving them the transitory and earthly goods which they themselves have chosen. Separating them from our company and from that of my Mother,[†] and from the angels and saints, I condemn them to the eternal dungeons and fire of hell in the company of Lucifer and his demons, whom they have freely served, and I deprive them for our eternity of the hope of a remedy. This is, my Father, the sentence which I pronounce as the Judge and Head of men and angels (Eph. 4:15; Col. 2:10), the testament I decree at my death, and the effect of human Redemption, repaying[‡] each one with that which justly belongs to him according to his works (II

*cf. Mt. 7:26-7 [Ed.]

† cf. Mt. 25:32 [Ed.]

‡ cf. Ps. 17:21; Dt. 32:35, 41 [Ed.]

Tim. 4:8)* and to the decree of thy incomprehensible wisdom in the equity of thy most strict justice.” Thus far did Christ our Savior on the Cross speak with his eternal Father. This mystery and sacrament was sealed and deposited in the Heart of most holy Mary as a hidden and enclosed testament, so through her intercession and disposition it would in its time, and even from that hour, be executed in the Church, just as until that time it had begun to be executed by divine knowledge and foresight in which the entire past and future is always one with the present.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MARY MOST HOLY.

698. My daughter, seek with all the powers of thy mind during thy whole life to remember the mysteries manifested to thee in this chapter. I, as thy Mother and Instructress, shall ask the Lord by his divine power to imprint in thy heart the knowledge which I have vouchsafed thee so it may remain fixed and ever present to thee as long as thou livest. In virtue of this blessing keep in thy memory Christ crucified, who is my divine Son and thy Spouse, and never forget the sufferings of the Cross and the doctrine taught by His Majesty upon it. This is the mirror by which thou must arrange all thy adornments, and the source from which thou art to draw thy interior beauty like a true daughter of the Prince (Ps. 44:14), so thou mayest be prepared, proceed and reign (Ib. 5) as the spouse of the supreme King. Since this honorable title obliges thee to seek with all effort his imitation and proportional similarity as far as possible to thee by his grace, and since this is to be the fruit of my doctrine, I thus desire that from today thou live crucified with Christ (II Cor. 5:15), entirely assimilated to thy Exemplar and Model, and dead to this earthly life. I desire the effects of the first sin to vanish in thee, for thee to live only for the operations and movements of divine virtue, and for thee to renounce thy inheritance as a daughter of the first Adam, so in thee may bear fruit the inheritance of the second Adam, who is Jesus Christ, thy Redeemer and Teacher.

699. Thy state of life must be for thee a most rigid cross on which thou must remain crucified, and thou must not widen thy path by seeking for dispensation and weakening the interpretation of thy rules to make it easy and comfortable, but at the same time, insecure and full of imperfections. This is the deception into which the children of Babylon and of Adam fall, that each one according to his state seeks in his works to look for widenings in the law of God; they work sparingly for the salvation of their souls in their efforts to buy heaven very cheaply, or risk losing it by dreading the restrictions and entire subjection necessary to observe rigorously the divine law and its precepts. Hence arises the desire to find explanations and opinions which smooth the paths and highways of eternal life, without heeding the doctrine of my divine Son that the path of life is very narrow (Mt. 7:14). They forget the Lord himself has walked these narrow paths so no one might imagine he can reach eternal life over paths more spacious and comfortable to the flesh and to the inclinations vitiated by sins. This danger is greater for ecclesiastics and religious, who by their state must follow their Master and adjust themselves to his life and poverty, and for this must choose the Way of the Cross. Yet some of them desire the dignity they attain or the religious state itself to be for their own temporal comfort and the increase of the estimation and applause they receive from others, and the attainment of greater honors than they would have received in another state; and in order to obtain this they lighten the cross they have promised to carry, in this way living in their state very comfortably and conformable to the carnal life by deceitful opinions and explanations. In their time they shall

* cf. also Lam. 3:64; Lk. 14:14; Is. 35:4, 66:6 [Ed.]

recognize the truth of that saying of the Holy Ghost (Prov. XXI [v. 2]): *Every way of a man seemeth right to himself; but the Lord weigheth the hearts.*

700. I desire thee to be so far from this deceit, my daughter, that thou strictly live up to the most rigorous demands of thy profession in such a way that thou shalt become unable to stretch thyself in any way, being nailed immovably to the cross with Christ. Thou must set aside all temporal advantages for the least point pertaining to the utmost perfection of thy state. Thy right hand, my daughter, thou hast nailed by obedience, reserving for thyself not the least movement, activity, word or thought not controlled by this virtue. Thou must not maintain any position that is of thy own choice, but only such as is willed by others; thou must not appear wise in thy own conceit in anything (Prov. III [v. 7]), but ignorant and blind in order to follow entirely the guidance of thy superiors. He who promises (says the Wise Man, Prov. VI [v.1-2]) binds his hands, and by his words shall he be bound and chained. Thou hast nailed thy right hand by the vow of obedience, and hast thereby lost thy liberty and thy right to desire or not desire. Thy left hand thou hast nailed by the vow of poverty, depriving thee of all right to follow any inclination toward the objects usually coveted by the eyes, for in both the use and the desire for such creatures thou must rigorously imitate Christ impoverished and despoiled upon the Cross. By the third vow of chastity thou hast nailed thy feet so all thy steps and movements may be pure, chaste and beautiful.* For this thou must not permit in thy presence the least word offensive to purity, nor by looking upon or touching any human creature allow any sensual image or impression within thee. Thine eyes and all thy senses are to remain consecrated to chastity, without making more use of them than to fix them upon Jesus crucified. The fourth vow of perpetual enclosure thou shalt securely guard in the side and bosom of my divine Son to which I assign thee. So this doctrine may appear to thee sweet, and this path less narrow, contemplate and consider in thy heart the image of my Son and Lord full of blood, torments, sorrows, and at last nailed to the Cross, no part of his sacred body being exempt from wounds and excruciating pains. His Majesty and I were most solicitous and compassionate toward all the children of men; for them we suffered and endured such bitter sorrows so they would be encouraged not to refuse less severe sufferings for their own eternal good and in return for so obliging a love. Therefore let mortals show themselves grateful, willingly entering upon the rough and thorny path, taking up the cross in order to imitate and follow Christ (Mt. 16:24) and reach eternal happiness, since this is the straight path thereto.

* cf. Cant. 7:1 [Ed.]