

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

BT
601
J62

CHARLES JOURNET

OUR LADY OF
SORROWS

Translated by

F. J. SHEED

NEW YORK
SHEED & WARD

MCMXXXIX

NIHIL OBSTAT: H. E. CALNAN
CENSOR DEPUTATUS
IMPRIMATUR: CAN. S. BANFI
VIC. GEN.
SOUTHWARCI DIE 22 APRILIS 1938

Theology Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

CONTENTS

Foreword	7
Introduction	9
I The Three Sorrows that Belong to our Lord's Childhood	17
1. Simeon's Prophecy	
2. The Flight into Egypt	
3. The Disappearance of the Child Jesus	
II Growth of the Sorrow of Separation	31
'Who is my mother?'	
'Yea rather, blessed are they ...'	
The Marriage Feast of Cana	
III The Four Sorrows that Arose from the Passion of Jesus	50
4. The Carrying of the Cross	
5. The Crucifixion	
6. The Taking Down from the Cross	
7. The Placing in the Tomb	

CONTENTS

Appendix I	The Com-Passion of Our Lady	66
Appendix II	The Co-Redemptrix	72
Appendix III	'The Swoon'	81
Notes		85

FOREWORD

THE sorrow of the Mother of God is immeasurably beyond what human words can say. It remains a secret between the Virgin and her Son. Revelation contains that small hint of it which has been divinely communicated to the world. This the Church preserves lovingly. In her liturgy for the feast of Seven Dolours she ventures to comment upon it, compassionately and tenderly and reverently. She does not forbid even the humblest of her children to comment likewise, provided that this be done with humility, claiming no more than to stammer out some tiny part of all that could be said in order that men's souls may be preserved from error or forgetfulness. But the Church knows better than any that the inspired words, when they are received with living faith and contemplated in the light of the gifts of understanding and wisdom, have a power of their

FOREWORD

own to lead souls to the heart of the revealed mystery where words themselves are powerless. This is the secret of her liturgy wherein the great texts of the Gospel pass before our eyes in the recurrent cycles of the years.

INTRODUCTION

LET us think upon the love that there was between Jesus and His Mother.

His love for her could know no increase. In the first moment it filled His soul in full measure and overflowing. Thus it will remain for all eternity. It is so mighty that nothing can be added to it.

Her love for Him *could* know increase.

Yet even in the first instant it was wonderful. Combined in it were the most marvellous outpourings of the order of Nature and of the order of Grace. In the order of Nature, it was the love of Mary for a Child which in the very act that made her mother did not violate her virginity but consecrated it: she brought Him into the world without travail, as effortlessly as a ray of light passing through a window. In the order of Grace, it was the love of a heart supernaturally pure, which

INTRODUCTION

had known no stain of sin, which from the first moment beat only for God—a heart filled with Charity to overflowing like a stream running bank-high and ever growing to become a great river.

The love of the Virgin for her Son was thus perfect from the beginning yet could grow. Its first perfection was the perfection of the seed. And the seed must blossom and come to the perfection of the fruit. Now everything moved in harmony for this end. Consider first her docility — a docility delicate, clear-seeing, ready at each moment to find some deeper depth as God's demands were progressively manifested to it. This docility increased in a marvellous manner in that moment when, to the angel who came to reveal her vocation, the Virgin replied in words and in her heart, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy Word' (Luke i, 38). It would continue to grow, and grow mightily until her death.

INTRODUCTION

It had to be so. For at the instant of the Incarnation, she bore within her Him Who had come to teach men the unimaginable demands of love. Of her He asked more than of all others, for thus it was that He caused love to grow in her. No love here below is as dear to Him as this love of His Mother. Its growth He Himself would direct. In all other cases, it is the mother who gives, the child who receives. Not so here, for the Child is the Master of love. He was to lead her by ways so high, so mysterious, so sorrowful that it is manifest to us that He made the same choice for His Mother that His heavenly Father had made for Him: "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptised; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished" (Luke xii, 50).

Let us study, in the visible signs left us in the Gospel, the mysterious law governing the mighty upward movement of love in Our Lady.

All the rigour that the heavenly Father

INTRODUCTION

used towards the Son in Whom He was well-pleased, His Son seems in turn to have used towards the Mother He loved. With His own hands He offers to His Mother the chalice which He likewise had to drink in spite of His three supplications.

We cannot but be struck as we read the Gospel at the discovery that whenever Jesus meets His Mother, it is always to break something in her, to wound more deeply that poor tenderness of emotion wherewith the heart of the most loving and most holy of mothers was wrung. Yet that tenderness was utterly legitimate. It seems that she received her heart of flesh only that it might be wounded by the Child for Whom alone it beat. It seems as though Jesus treats her with an amazing, an inconceivable harshness.

In the natural order no man could be so harsh to such a mother without being guilty of sin, for no mere man could in the very moment of natural harshness be supernaturally so tender. The tender-

INTRODUCTION

ness of natural love is holy, and each time Jesus wounded it afresh it was to bring to a more burning intensity the flame of the supernatural charity that bound them. Amazing and inconceivable as His harshness may be, it is nought else but the instrument of a tenderness more amazing and more inconceivable still. It is a mask covering the mystery of the tenderest and mightiest of loves.

In the Gospel we find the secret of the surprising harshness that Our Lord often shows to great souls. Consider another instance where He humbles, almost tramples upon, the love of a mother. The episode of the Canaanite woman (Matt. xv, 22-8) sheds a great light. 'And behold a woman of Canaan who came out of those coasts, crying out, said to him: Have mercy on me, oh Lord, thou Son of David. My daughter is grievously troubled by a devil.' It was not for herself she was praying, but for her daughter. 'Who answered not a word. And His disciples

INTRODUCTION

came and besought Him, saying: Send her away, for she crieth after us: And He answering, said: I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the House of Israel.'

Herein then Jesus is less merciful than His disciples. What of the poor mother? Must she lose heart? 'But she came and adored Him, saying: Lord, help me. Who answering, said: It is not good to take the bread of the children and to cast it to the dogs.' It was a cruel word, and seemed to leave her no course but to find some lonely place where she might weep the tears of her despair. But she did not despair. 'She said: Yea, Lord: for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the tables of their masters.' Where did that poor bruised heart with its poor spurned grief find so instantly all the love that inspired so sublime an answer? Surely it was Jesus who poured that love into her soul at the very moment when by word and gesture He was repulsing her. For in that repulse He brought her love to a higher

INTRODUCTION

and higher pitch, just as we dam a river to multiply its power. Assuredly it was Jesus who was working within her, and that is why her faith was marvellous — so marvellous that the Artist is in admiration of what He has made and in some sort falls captive to the beauty of His work: 'Then Jesus answering, said to her: Oh woman, great is thy faith: be it done to thee as thou wilt: and her daughter was cured from that hour.'

That word 'woman' Jesus was to say to one holier still than the Canaanite and of greater faith. And that time too He was to do what the Woman wished. So much is obvious at Cana. But it is true of other incidents wherein it is not visibly seen, wherein the express desire of the Virgin was not granted. For her deepest desire, the one to which she held closest, was not that which she expressed in words. Beneath all else her desire was to be like her Son. And if He must be set apart for the salvation of the world, she in her turn will be as lonely as He. In their very separation from each

INTRODUCTION

other there was a profound unity. She was to follow Him to the very heart of His redemptive work, so that she was to be called Co-Redemptrix . . .

Twice in the year the Church weeps for the Seven Dolours of Our Lady — on the Friday after Passion Sunday, and on the day after the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, September 15th. The memory of each of these seven griefs is recalled in the responsories at Matins on this latter feast day. The first three belong to Our Lord's childhood. The last four to His Passion and Death. Between these extremes, other trials came upon Our Lady. We need not say that 'She had constantly before her eyes, the Passion of Jesus'. St. Therese of Lisieux thinks that it was not so. But it remains that even in moments of happiness she kept that gravity which ever springs in the deepest souls from the remembrance of great sorrows past and the assurance of great sorrows to come.

THE THREE SORROWS THAT
BELONG TO OUR LORD'S
CHILDHOOD

BECAUSE natural love is profaned in the world, it is necessary that the purest, tenderest and holiest of natural loves should be offered up in sacrifice, in reparation. The Virgin Mary must be separated from her Child. Her hardest suffering must be to see Him withdrawing Himself from her affection.

First Sorrow. — Mary knew from the word of the Angel that the Holy Ghost should come upon her, that the power of the Most High should overshadow her, and that the Child to be born of her should be holy and should be called the Son of God. Later she heard the voice of Elizabeth

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

proclaiming her blessed among women and saluting her as Mother of her Lord. She herself sang of the mighty things done to her by the Almighty. All these things are in the first chapter of St. Luke's gospel. Then came the birth of the Child at Bethlehem and the message the shepherds heard by night: 'For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David.' Mary kept all these words. She pondered them in her heart (Luke ii, 19). All of them shed their own light upon the mystery that God had accomplished in her. Thus Mary knew all.

When the time of the purification was accomplished, Mary and Joseph went up to the temple with the Child. Simeon was there, a just man, waiting for the consolation of Israel and with the assurance from the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. And he took the Child into his arms and blessed God saying: 'My eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

peoples: a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel' (Luke ii, 32).

The Gospel comments: 'And His father and mother were wondering at those things, which were spoken concerning Him.' Their astonishment here was not sorrow, it was simply wonder, surprise. They alone knew what the Child was, and behold Simeon cries aloud their secret and proclaims salvation not only for Israel but for the Nations. The hour of sorrow was not yet come for Mary.

'And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His Mother: Behold this Child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce . . .' Here is the first of the seven sorrows, pregnant with all the others of whose coming it gives obscure announcement. It fills the Virgin's heart with pain beyond speaking. She has just been told explicitly that her Son is to be 'a sign which shall be contradicted . . . that

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed'. He will meet hostility. He is come to save His own, but His own will to destroy Him. Beneath Simeon's words she discovers depths that the old man himself knows nothing of. This prophecy overwhelms her utterly — or rather, fills her to the brim with its bitterness. All her being is wounded with it, all its beauty lost in the grief it promises. Silently she utters her own grief from the depth of her heart: 'Call me not Beautiful, but Bitter, for the Almighty hath quite filled me with bitterness.'¹

Yet she was not utterly beaten down. From the very depth of her bitterness the first ray of an ineffable dawn shines out. From now she has the certitude that she is divinely associated in the suffering of her Son. She has the assurance that to soften the cruel edge of the Son's Passion there will be the tender Compassion of the Mother. Sustained by this sublime hope, she abides in expectation of the sword which shall pierce her

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

heart in the very act of piercing His. Already Simeon's word has made bloody entry like a sword. The Seven Dolours have begun — those Seven Dolours which are to be like seven dagger-thrusts: and indeed the Flemish Primitives, borne on by an inspiration more pious and moving than artistically successful, were to depict them as seven swords meeting in her breast.

Second Sorrow. — The prophecy was the first sword. Its accomplishment began at once. 'Behold an Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise, and take the Child and His Mother and fly into Egypt: and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him. Who arose and took the Child and His mother by night and retired into Egypt' (Matt. ii, 13-14). It was the second sorrow.² The Virgin who had been given a foreshadowing of what was to be by the prophecies that had been uttered, now began to learn the same

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

things by seeing the prophecies accomplished. She had been told that her Son was to be a sign which should be contradicted, now she learns the first fruits of this in a hurried flight by night towards a land of exile of which she knew not the customs nor the language nor so much as where it might be. On Christmas night, when she had found no room in the inn, the Child at least, hidden within her, did not suffer physically. All the troubles of the outer world could not reach Him. But now, how could she spare Him the hardships of the road, the chances of the weather, the trials of hunger and thirst and weariness? In the place they had left, the threat of death still remained, since Herod sought the Child to destroy Him. Unimaginable was her dereliction in those days and nights of desert journeying. Surely God would work some miracle for the Child which was His! Incredible that the Child, a tiny frail thing that suffered and said no word, should be His. Incredible that if it were so, God should thus seem to abandon It, in

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

the midst of enemies, to the pitifully inadequate protection of a poor man and his poor wife.

So much mystery tested not only their courage, but their faith: not that their faith wavered under the trial: rather was it strengthened and purified. This road they were on had seen many a marvel wrought by God long ago; to-day they trod the road in want and weakness. From the land of Egypt God had once recalled His beloved Son, the people of Israel; to the land of Egypt these two were journeying back bearing a little Child, more precious in Himself than all the children of adoption, since He was the Only-Begotten of the Father, the Word made Flesh. But a day was to come when the Word of Osee (xi, 1), 'I called my son out of Egypt', would receive a new meaning. Their poverty would continue, but their exile ended. Joseph was able to take the Child and His mother and return into the land of Israel.

In the long journeyings between the place of her exile and her own land, one joy at least the Virgin

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

never lost. She had her Child with her. She continued to wrap Him in swaddling clothes as in the stable. She watched over Him unceasingly. He was never away from her.

Third Sorrow. — Does any ordinary mother ever lose her child? Never. How then came it that this Mother lost this Child as we read towards the end of the second chapter of St. Luke's gospel? It can only have been that He himself brought it about of set purpose. By His own deliberate act He eluded the vigilance of His parents. At a given moment He veiled their eyes and departed from them. 'When they returned, the Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem. And His parents knew it not. And thinking that He was in the company, they came a day's journey.' Not till the evening did the veil fall from their eyes. Then they 'sought Him among their kinsfolks and acquaintance. And not finding Him, they returned into Jerusalem seeking Him'. It was bitter humiliation, bitterer anguish.³

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

Yet they knew full well that they were not in fault, that there had been no failure of their love. Then why should He treat them so, why cause them so much pain? This was the point of the reproach that Mary uttered, associating with herself by a tender movement of her charity the husband who suffered with her in silence: 'Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.'

His answer seems harsh, so harsh that it does not at first yield up all the light that it contains: 'And he said to them: How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my father's business?' And they understood not the word that He spoke unto them.' It was the beginning of the third sorrow.⁵

'They understood not the word that He spoke unto them.' Yet they knew perfectly well that He must be with His Father, about His Father's business. The Angel had announced to Mary that His name should be called Jesus, which is Saviour, that

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

He would reign in the house of Jacob for ever (Luke i, 31 and 33). Simeon had said further that in spite of the contradictions of which He should be the sign, He would be the glory of God's people Israel and a light to the revelation of the Gentiles (Luke ii, 32). She had not forgotten any one of these words. Thus she knew the supernatural mission of her Child. She knew that He was more God's Son than hers, that He belonged to God more than to her.

But so far she had no more than an obscure presentiment of the mysterious demands of that grace which had made of her the Mother of God the Saviour. Naturally He must be with His father, but did that mean that He must detach her from Himself? Why must He occupy Himself *without her* with that business which was to her as it was to Him dearer than life? Did He doubt her love or her fidelity or even her courage — she who would have followed him anywhere!

For Mary then this was a mysterious trial.⁶ A

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

bleak night came down upon her heart. Though she was without shadow of sin it must have seemed to her that she was unworthy of her mission, rejected by her Son, and in such a feeling there was measureless agony. All these years earlier she had a foretaste of desolation like that which her Son was to know in His passion. The cry of her heart, could one but have heard it, must have been like a first shadowing forth of a more terrible cry that still rends the hearts of men, for what could she have felt but 'My Son, my Son, why hast Thou forsaken me?'

This darkness of agony was lightened for the moment by the joy of the reunion. For Jesus 'went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them'.⁷ But the darkness came down again when Jesus left them to go into the desert. And out of the darkness there came to Mary a great light. She understood the special road that she must tread. It was not that her Son doubted her. He separated Himself from her thus bodily only

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

that He might associate her in that agony of desolation in which the redemption had to be accomplished. In the garden of Gethsemane the three favoured disciples were only a stone's cast away. But their eyes were heavy with sleep. She, who would not have slept, could not be so close. Nor could any visible being. Only, for the space of an instant, when His sweat became as drops of blood, there appeared to Him an angel from heaven (Luke xxiii, 43). Mary was beginning to see these deepest depths. She was discovering the place that abandonment must have in the work of redemption. With that, all reason for reproach vanished. Her Son, in thus making her drink His chalice in advance, loved her if that were possible even more than she could have dared to hope.

Thus the third sorrow, for which the first two were a preparation, was the sorrow of the gradual breaking of the visible bonds which bound her ineffably to her Son. And this sorrow as she saw and as she

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

willed — with a will torn and anguished like that wherewith Jesus accepted the will of His Father— was to be a sorrow that should pierce deeper into her heart all the days of her life; and of this sorrow she was to die. Thus she bore her sufferings in silence and the power of her love, pressing them close to her heart.

From now on her road lay clear in the illumination that had come to her. But it is one thing to see the road, another to tread it to the end.^s If her Son, for all that He was the Son of God, had to learn obedience upon the Cross by the things which He suffered (Heb. v, 8), so likewise she had day by day to come to the experimental knowledge of the grief of separation. At the end of her life, when she came to recall for the first Christians the memories she had stored in her heart as they are preserved by St. Luke in the Gospel of the Infancy, she had become divinely expert in sorrow and she could say in truth that 'in those first happy times she had not comprehended all that was

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

implied by the nature and mission of her Son',⁹ and by her own sublime mission as co-redemptrix.

The temporary disappearance of Jesus, and still more the words by which he explained it, were equivalent to a second sorrowful prophecy, which amplified that of Simeon and every day revealed more and more of the fullness of its meaning.

GROWTH OF THE SORROW OF SEPARATION

WHEN death comes to take away a child there is heartbreak. But when the mother can have pride in her son, when she hears that he died in a desperate attack or for a noble cause, she finds consolation in the praises that wreath his memory. Her sorrow is not an unmixed grieving.

But if with her own eyes she sees her son mocked, beaten, spit upon, what is there that can lighten her suffering? In such a moment she will ask one favour only, to be allowed to be near her son to protect him with her tenderness. This favour our Lady was not granted. And it was her Son who refused it.

The episode is in the third chapter of St. Mark's gospel. Jesus had chosen his apostles. He had

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

driven out demons and had begun to preach the Kingdom of God. Crowds thronged about Him. He entered a house. The crowd gathered there likewise, so that they could not even take their food. 'And when His friends had heard of it, they went out to lay hold on Him. For it was said:¹⁰ He is become mad. And the scribes who were come down from Jerusalem said: 'He hath Beelzebub and by the prince of devils he casteth out devils.'

Thus the scribes looked upon Jesus as one possessed; but many thought He was merely mad. 'They said,' or, 'it was said: He is become mad.' Who said this? Not His relations, presumably. Certainly not His Mother. But His relations and still more His Mother were anxious. They knew that He was alone, exposed to the ill-will of the people and the hatred of the scribes. For that cause they came.

Poor Mother! She knew the bite of a new sort of suffering. Up till now it had not occurred to her

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

that the salvation of the world required that her Son, who was Wisdom Incarnate, should be treated like a madman and that He in whom the word of God dwelt ineffably should be accused of being possessed by Beelzebub. These insults, these blasphemies were a new note in her heart's agony. She knew that her Son felt them likewise and that His heart was bleeding under them. For she knew that within the house, where the scribes had come, He sought to justify Himself before them: 'How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.' He was alone against them all.

She longed to enter, to take Him away with her, to show Him that her heart at least was faithful, to strain Him to her breast if He would allow her. 'His Mother and his brethren¹¹ came. And standing without sent unto Him, calling Him. And the multitude sat about Him. And they say to Him: behold thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee.'

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

It was a moving moment, but Jesus was not moved. He had been bearing the harshness of His enemies; yet the moment He meets tenderness, the moment he becomes for His Mother an object of compassion, in that moment He seems to grow harsh Himself. It almost seemed that He scarcely deigned to notice that poor maternal love that was offered to Him, that frail refuge that she would have made for Him. 'And answering them, He said: Who is my mother and my brethren?' In that place these words seem hard, even cruel. What is the mystery contained within them?

What that mystery is, He proceeds to show: 'and looking round about on them who sat about Him, he saith, Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of God, he is my brother and my sister and my mother'. Beyond the bonds of natural relationship appear the bonds of a new relationship, spiritual and outshining the first as the sun outshines the light of tapers. Natural relationship is not denied. The bonds

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

that bind husband and wife, parents and children, master and servant, still remain. Indeed they are immeasurably ennobled (Ephesians v, 21—vi, 9). But above them are the bonds that bind the children of the Kingdom in a mysterious, more intimate kinship; and these are more precious and more profoundly interior to us, are beyond the power of time and relate us to each other by what is closest in us to God. Because this is so, the bonds of natural relationship become illicit and must be trampled under foot whenever they so act upon us as to weaken the spiritual relationship: 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple' (Luke xiv, 26). The saints are in no delusion as to what our Lord means, as we shall see.

Can it then have been that our Lord's kinsfolk had come to Capharnaum to dissuade Him from preaching — that, under the impulse of too earthly an affection, they were trying to deflect Him from

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

the mission, entrusted Him by His father in heaven, of founding the Kingdom? It may be that His brethren were thus uncomprehending. But not His Mother. She knew too well that such a Son must be about His Father's business. She had come only to share the ignoring of sarcasm and blasphemy, and to be with Him visibly when the attack was visibly massing against Him. Why then the harshness of His word? Why should He thus refuse the gesture of her love?

It was of necessity that something in itself lawful, something incomparably pure and holy and delicate should be thus eternally broken. The Virgin's sacrifice could never be the renunciation of sin, for she had no sin; it could only be the renunciation of things holy for the sake of things holier. A physical tenderness that was holy had to be denied in order that men might know how they must treat physical tenderness that was not holy. It was of necessity that what was sinless in the Virgin should bear affliction and that the rightful desire

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

of her heart to bring visible consolation to her Son should be cast aside in order that she might perfectly resemble her Son and that she might suffer in the likeness of Him who was to suffer and die in desolation. Thus, like to her Son and better than any who should come after her, she was to do 'the will of God'; more fully than any who should come after her, she was to be to her Son a brother and a sister and a mother; more fully than any who should come after her, she was to enter into the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of spiritual relationships. And of that Kingdom she was to be the Queen. The word of Jesus that called upon her to sacrifice the natural manifestation of her love was harsh only to the ear. Even more powerfully than the harsh words he was later to address to the Canaanite woman, His word to His mother wrought in her soul those mighty increases of divine charity by which she could consent to renunciations ever more total.

From that time the Virgin never again came to

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

offer her Son consolation against insult or martyrdom. She remained afar off. She knew that such a loneliness He needed for the world's redemption. She troubled Him no more. Later, when He told them that He was the Son of the blessed God, He was once more treated by the Jews as a blasphemer and condemned to death (Mark xv, 61-64). Once more — this time by Pilate's soldiers — he was thought to be mad. They stripped him and put a scarlet cloak about him; plating a crown of thorns they put it upon His head and a reed in His right hand; and bowing the knee before Him, they mocked Him saying Hail, King of the Jews (Matt. xxvi, 28-9). But the Mother of Jesus made no move to draw near Him. She knew the bitter forms that the sorrow of separation must assume.

The gospel of St. Luke contains, in the parallel passage, the same teaching (Luke xi, 17-28). St. Luke likewise gives us the reply that Jesus made when He was accused of casting out devils by

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

Beelzebub. 'If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his Kingdom stand? St. Luke gives us further the parable of the unclean spirit which, being cast out of a man, walked through places without water, seeking rest; and not finding takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself and returns to the place whence he came out, so that the last state of that man is worse than the first. The unclean spirit is Satan who, formerly cast out of the house of Israel and finding it occupied by Christ, essays to return and bring the Jews down to a level lower than the pagans. The Jews understood the parable. Their hatred grew with their understanding. They became menacing.

It was then that a woman lifted up her voice in behalf of Jesus. It has been observed that women are bolder in taking the part of those who are insulted, their heart urges them and they speak out what they feel.¹² There is an example of this in the life of St. Benedict—Joseph Labre. One day in Rome he was attacked by eight or ten men who

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

struck him, kicked him, flung him to the ground, spat upon him. A woman who was passing by, alone as she was, came to his rescue with an extraordinary air of authority; and as they sought to excuse themselves on the ground that he was mad and might therefore be mocked, she answered, 'It is you who are mad, and he is a saint'. That word on behalf of the saint of poverty was the direct echo, across the space of the years, of another voice which seventeen centuries earlier had been uplifted in Galilee to defend the King of poverty against His enemies. 'As he spoke these things', says the gospel, 'a certain woman from the crowd, lifting up her voice, said to him: blessed is the womb that bore thee and the paps that gave thee suck.' How enviable was the lot of that woman, to whom it was given to defend Jesus. Surely He, in His turn, would one day proclaim her Blessed.

Here the mystery is again upon us. If the woman had simply defended Jesus, perhaps he would have publicly praised and glorified her. But

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

she had spoken of the Mother of Jesus. She had envied her who had had the glory of cradling Him and loving Him with the love that mothers have for their sons. And upon this point Jesus would tolerate no misunderstanding. Those who range themselves with His Mother merit to be treated by Him in some sense as He treated His Mother. They merit the realization that the sacrifice of the purest maternal tenderness has been demanded, and offered, for the foundation of the nobler Kingdom of spiritual relationships. They merit to be associated with some part of the mystery of separation.

Such an honour was accorded this woman great of heart, whose name is unknown and whose memory lives for ever. She had glorified Mary. But had she realized what Mary was? Had she realized that Mary's true glory was not to be the Mother of Jesus but to be a Mother worthy of Jesus? Had she realized that motherhood according to the flesh was for Mary but the sacrament of an

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

ineffable grace whereby she was made to participate — in a manner altogether unique — in the communicable sanctity of the Saviour, which is the very foundation of the Kingdom of spiritual relations? Did she realize that the pain of visible separation from her Son, a pain that grew every moment, was demanded of her in order that she might be the first member of the new spiritual family, that she might be Mother according to grace of all men? How could she have realized all this or any of it?

So that Jesus proceeded to illumine her heart and unbare to her the most hidden glories of Mary. He corrected her faith, by giving it a new direction towards the great Kingdom of those who hear the word of God and keep it, of whom Mary is Queen — for she had, from the first day, kept and pondered in her heart the message that the Angel had announced to the shepherds (Luke ii, 19), and the words the Child Himself had said at Jerusalem (Luke ii, 51). All this is in our Lord's

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

answer to the nameless woman: 'Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it' (Luke xi, 28). 'Yea rather.' It is as though Jesus made no comment upon what she had said to the praise of Mary. He did not deny it.¹³ But He would not leave it simply at that, she must go beyond it. He took hold of the faith that was coming to life in her and turned it firmly towards those spiritual realities which she barely glimpsed and of which the natural privileges of Mary were but the outward sacrament.

Yet how magnificent these privileges become once we grasp that they are the efficacious sign, the instrument, of the highest graces. Our Lady's motherhood according to the flesh, with all the agony and renunciation it demanded, becomes immeasurably more splendid when we know it as the cause of the purest love ever granted to a creature. Completed by Jesus' answer, the words of the great-hearted woman of Galilee begin to reveal the fullness of their meaning. Thus the

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

Church can repeat them. In the mass *Salve sancta Parens* (of which the gospel is taken from this same passage of St. Luke) she joins them to those of Our Lord. She repeats them at the Communion, when Christ enters into us to communicate to us sacramentally a little of that love which on the day of the Incarnation he communicated to the Virgin in such abundance: 'Blessed is the womb of the Virgin Mary which bore the Son of the eternal Father!' By setting down here, in a more perfect light, the acclamation of the unknown woman, the Church continues to fulfil through the ages the Virgin's prophecy: 'Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed' (Luke i, 48).

A sword should pierce her soul and all generations should call her blessed — blessed because in the likeness of her Son, she bore suffering and desolation in their fullness.

Is the interpretation we have given of the

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

passages of scripture concerning the Blessed Virgin necessarily the true one? Is it certain that Jesus, under the external semblance of repulsing His Mother's tenderness, was actually binding her to Him still closer by an interior love and associating her with Himself in the work of redemption? An episode which took place at the beginning of His public life but which we have held in reserve till now, seems to put the matter beyond question. It is the episode at Cana (John ii, 1-11).

There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. And the wine failing, those who were giving the feast were ashamed. Jesus' mother saw this and said to her son: 'They have no wine.' Verbally, this was a mere statement of fact. Actually she was asking for a miracle. Then came our Lord's mysterious answer: 'τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι; Woman, what is it to me and to thee? My hour is not yet come.' The literal translation is as we have given it — *What is it to me and to thee?* The bearing of

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

this phrase, used to this day by the Arabs in Palestine, is roughly expressed by the words 'Leave it to me'. The whole meaning depends upon the tone in which the phrase is uttered — they might signify impatience or rebuke or indifference. In the present instance, all three of these possible implications are negatived by the event. But they can also bear within them great tenderness, signifying: 'Do not be disturbed, I have seen all, all is well, leave it to me.' And it was thus that Jesus spoke to his Mother.¹⁴

He called her Woman, as at the hour when He was nailed to the cross (John xix, 26), a word of reverence — for He was speaking to her as God, in regard to a solemn matter, one that went beyond the framework of family relations, for it touched upon the destiny of the Kingdom of God.

It reads as though Jesus was quite clearly refusing the implied but unspoken request of His Mother. He did it with great gentleness and He gave her His reason — that the hour for the inauguration of

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

His public life of preaching and miracles was not yet come. The meaning seems perfectly clear: Mary must trust in Him without reserve, must leave the whole matter entirely in His hands: and so, indeed, she had done from the beginning.

But here what seemed so clear is suddenly cast into darker mystery. Jesus had just told His Mother that His hour was not yet come, and she acted as if He had said the reverse. She seemed to take the miracle for granted. 'His mother said to the waiters: Whatsoever he shall say to you, do ye.'¹⁵

Here is the key to the mystery. If there had not been the prayer of Mary, the hour fixed from all eternity for the inauguration of Jesus' public ministry would have come later, and Jesus, who was to accredit the message He bore to men by signs and wonders, would have awaited some other occasion to manifest Himself—would have made a paralytic walk, or given sight to a blind man, or cleansed a leper. This is what Jesus Himself was

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

affirming when He told His Mother that in this sense His hour was not yet come. But at the same moment, by a secret illumination with which He filled her heart, He willed her to know that from all eternity the hour of His public ministry had been advanced because of the humble prayer she had just uttered. There is profound tenderness, an infinite delicacy of love half-hidden under the mystery, restraint and even, as some readers feel, coldness of the words recorded by St. John. Marvellous, too, the power of the Virgin's prayer. A thought of her heart, a word uttered by her with the desire to relieve the mildest of human embarrassments — the thought and the word were foreknown from all eternity, and from all eternity the hour was set forward at which Jesus should begin the public preaching of the Kingdom of God. Nothing so great has ever been said, or ever will be said, upon the might of her intercession as the gospel story of the miracle of Cana. It was the hour of Mary's power.

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

The Virgin had all power over the heart of her Son. She had done His will too utterly for Him to refuse to do hers — *Voluntatem timentium se faciet* (Ps. cxliv, 19) — the Lord will do the will of them that fear him with the loving fear of a child for its father. And in fact Jesus speaks: 'Fill the water-pots with water, And they filled them to the brim. And he said to them: Draw out now, and carry to the chief steward of the feast . . . This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.' It was to the intervention of the Virgin that they owed their belief in Him thus early.

Mary was close to her Son in the bond of love. But at the same time, the suffering of separation, which had lain in her heart from the day the Child had slipped away from her in Jerusalem, began to grow and did not cease its growing from the moment when His public life opened. That suffering held supreme tests in store for her.

THE FOUR SORROWS THAT AROSE FROM THE PASSION OF JESUS

THE external separation of the Mother from her Son grew greater as the Passion proceeded.

Fourth Sorrow. — This was Mary's sufferings while Jesus was making the way of the cross. Pilate had delivered Jesus to the Jews. The Roman soldiers had taken him to crucify him. The custom was to make the condemned man carry his own cross.¹⁶ No exception was made for Jesus: 'And they took Jesus and led him forth. And bearing his own cross, he went forth to that place which is called the place of the skull, in Hebrew Golgotha' (John xix, 16-17). But they soon saw that Jesus was too weak

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

and that he might die under the load. When, according to the Synoptic gospels, they were outside the town, 'they laid hold of one Simon of Cyrene, coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him to carry after Jesus' (Luke xxii, 26). After that Jesus did not carry his cross. He walked before the others on the road to Calvary. And, says St. Luke, 'there followed him a great multitude of people and of women, who bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning to them said: Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me; but weep for yourselves and for your children' (Luke xxiii, 27-28). Let us pause at the fourth sorrow.¹⁷

Beyond the rabble of men and women, there to mock at Jesus, drawn to where He was by hatred and evil instinct, there were a handful of women, some of whom doubtless had known and loved Him, their hearts filled with pity. Among them was the Virgin. She made no effort, as once at Capharnaum, to draw near her Son to protect Him.

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

Her natural love was by now utterly broken and offered up. It was not for her to approach Jesus with consolation. She of all people must respect the lonely dereliction in which the world's salvation must be wrought. She wept, then, hidden among the women. And when Jesus stopped to speak, she knew from the beginning that for her He would have no word. It was to the women of Jerusalem that He spoke. He did not wish that they should weep for Him. He wished for no natural consolation. Let them weep for themselves and for their children. But the Virgin, who wept in the midst of them — for her Child she had no need to weep. She must weep for other women's children, for the children of those who were bringing her Son to His death. She had accepted fully, totally. But she must be broken anew, her nature more utterly crushed.

At that moment her task took on a new sublimity. She wept for the sins of men, she suffered not for herself but for the world's salvation. Her suffering,

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

bound close to His, was a co-redemptive suffering. She learnt what new regions of suffering love must seek out for itself if men were to be snatched from the terrible rigours of suffering that lay in wait for them. What these rigours were Jesus lets us glimpse in one lightning flash of revelation. To reveal the significance of the Passion, He draws aside for an instant the veils of the present and, in a phrase which is a supreme admonition of His love, lays bare before us the measureless demands of divine Justice. 'For behold the days shall come, wherein they will say: Blessed are the barren and the wombs that have not borne and the paps that have not given suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains: Fall upon us. And to the hills: cover us. For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry' (Luke xxiii, 29-31). If divine justice requires such suffering of the innocent, what does it hold in store for the guilty? If to make its fire it will take the green wood, how shall it spare the dry?

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

At that time the Virgin Mary knew the mysterious immensity of the Redemption. On the one hand she saw all the extent of the world's sins and on the other the intensity and the infinite value of the sorrow at whose cost they were atoned. In the steps of her Son, she descended still further, with all her being, into the depths of the redemptive suffering.

Fifth Sorrow. — Death was to break the last of the natural links still remaining mysteriously to bind the Virgin and her Son. 'And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, they crucified him there' (Luke xxiii, 33). . . 'Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother and his mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen' (John xix, 25). Mary was at the foot of the cross whereon her Son was crucified. This was the fifth of her sorrows.¹⁸

Mary stood at the foot of the cross. She showed no weakening. She was not upheld by the holy

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

women.¹⁹ On the contrary, in that moment she was upholding the whole Church by the irresistible upward movement of her love, strong as death. Standing erect she heard the Seven Last Words that came down from the height of the Cross into the desolation of her heart. *Stabat Mater dolorosa*.

Mary was close to the cross. But she made no move to embrace it. She remained a little away. In that last hour above all she must remain, in spite of her love, separated from her Son. When He cried out 'I thirst', it was not she, but the soldiers who, putting a sponge full of vinegar about hyssop, put it to his mouth (John xix, 28-9).

It might seem that she had now given all, that there was no more to be stripped from her. But Jesus required of her one last separation more agonizing than all. To lose her Son, she must not wait till He was dead. While He still lived He must break once for all the last bond of that purest of natural love that He felt rising toward Him from the foot of the cross. It was His will to die poor,

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

without even a mother. From now she must accept that another should be the object of her maternal tenderness. 'When Jesus therefore had seen his mother and the disciple standing whom he loved, he said to his mother: 'Woman, behold thy son' (John xix, 26).

For John the words were a joy unspeakable. But to Mary they were shattering. Of course she loved the disciple Jesus loved. But what an exchange. 'For Jesus,' cried St. Bernard, 'she was given John; for the Lord, the servant; for the Master, the disciple;²⁰ for the Son of God the son of Zebedee; for the true God, a mere man.'²¹ In the same sermon St. Bernard tells us that 'It was sharper than a sword, it pierced her very soul, unto the division of soul and spirit . . . Be not amazed, my brethren, if it be said that Mary knew martyrdom in her heart.'

Yet she remained erect at the foot of the cross. She was there still when the soldiers, having broken the legs of the two thieves, came to Jesus: 'When

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

they saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear opened his side: and immediately there came out blood and water' (John xix, 33-34). At that moment the suffering of the Saviour was at an end, the world's Redemption was accomplished. But the co-redemptive suffering was not ended; it must go on till the day when, under the pressure of a love that grew without ceasing, body and soul came to the separation of death. In the deepest depths of her soul, Mary felt the thrust of the lance. It was the crowning agony of the fifth sorrow.

Sixth Sorrow. — 'And when it was evening, there came a certain rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded that the body should be delivered (Matt. xxvii, 57-8). St. Luke (xxiii, 53) and St. John (xix, 38) give us the detail that

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

Joseph of Arimathea himself took down the body of Jesus from the cross. There is no doubt that the holy women helped him in this, nor that Mary received her Son's body at the foot of the cross.²² Thus the Liturgy tells further that when the body of Jesus was brought down from the cross, His Mother received Him in her arms and held Him close to her; and it compares her with the Sunamitess (1v Kings iv, 20) who when the child miraculously announced to her by the prophet was dead had held it upon her knees.²³ Thus soberly, in three or four words, the Liturgy calls up the image of the Pietà which has so powerfully moved the souls of Christian people.

At last the Mother could embrace her Son. All the lovely memories of His childhood were in the embrace, but alas only to sharpen the pain. She could hold Him to her because He was beyond the reach of consolation. All alone, without aid from any human creature, He had drunk the chalice of His Passion and Death. In her arms she

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

held with measureless reverence that sacred body which, though separated from His soul, yet remained immediately united to the very Person of the Word. She saw the wounds, but it was too late to heal them. 'From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head, there is no soundness therein: wounds and bruises and swelling sores' (Isa. i, 6). And even this poor contact was only for a short space.

Seventh Sorrow. — Yet there was no movement of rebellion in her, no violence of outcry against those who came to take her Son's body and place it in the tomb.

Joseph of Arimathea had brought fine linen to wrap His body (Mark xv, 46). Nicodemus was with him. 'They took therefore the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths, with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now there was in the place where he was crucified a garden: and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein no man

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

yet had been laid. There, therefore, because of the Parasceve of the Jews, they laid Jesus because the sepulchre was nigh at hand' (John xix, 40-2). It was a new sorrow for the Virgin to have to leave her Son.²⁴ But there was no weakening in her.²⁵

From now a new life began for her. Her role henceforth was to be at the heart of the church militant, sustaining it by the silence of her contemplation and her love. Action was for others. The gospel speaks of Mary Magdalen and the other Mary who, after Joseph of Arimathea had gone, remained a space sitting near the tomb (Matt. xxvii, 60-61), while the other women went off to prepare spices and ointments (Luke xxiii, 56), for the embalming of Jesus could not be long delayed. We hear of them again on the morning of Easter Sunday, and we hear of John to whom the Virgin had been given as Mother, and of others beside. But of the Virgin herself, no word. All her life was within. Long ago she had heard the first words of Jesus and had kept them in her heart.

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

And now she had heard His last words, the Seven Last Words, the least of which would have given her matter for meditation for all the time still remaining to her upon earth.

She knew that the work of Christ in Himself was consummated, and that the work of Christ in the totality of His members, the Church, had begun. She had not preached; she had contemplated, loved, suffered during the public life of Jesus. And now that He had founded the church in His blood, her part was still not to preach but to contemplate, love, suffer. Scripture mentions her once more — before Pentecost — but only to show her prayer mingled with that of the apostles, the brethren of Jesus and the Christian community: 'All these were persevering with one mind in prayer, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren' (Acts i, 14). On the evening of His burial, when Joseph of Arimathea had gone and the lights of the Sabbath had begun to shine in Jerusalem,²⁶ she knew of her own

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

knowledge that from now on she had no one here below upon whom she could lean, she knew what a weight of suffering Jesus had laid upon her in making her our Mother. It was the seventh of her sorrows.

O all you who come into this world to suffer, 'behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow'. And you, my brother, for whom she has wept, over whom she had wept, 'do not forget, in the depth of your heart, the weeping of your Mother, that the propitiation and benediction of those days may be accomplished in you'.²⁷

'Thy own soul a sword shall pierce.' From the first sorrow to the seventh, the sword of Simeon's prediction, had cut steadily deeper into her heart, bringing her the realized knowledge of ever-new suffering. Now at the end she was more desolate even than the Jerusalem of the prophet's lamentations: 'To what shall I compare thee, or to what

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

shall I liken thee, O Daughter of Jerusalem? To what shall I equal thee, that I may comfort thee, O Virgin daughter of Sion? For great as the sea is thy destruction' (Lam. ii, 13). But she remained strong in sorrow. Neither her soul nor her frail body knew an instant's wavering. If in the strict sense she did not actually undergo martyrdom,²⁸ her love and courage immeasurably surpassed the love and courage of the martyrs. And her suffering likewise exceeded theirs; she bore more than they of the terrible burden of the world's sin. She was a martyr eminently, as the philosophers say, if not formally. She surpasses all virgins in purity and all martyrs in fortitude; so that the Liturgy can hail her in the last responsory of Matins as first rose of martyrs, lily among virgins:

Ave princeps generosa,
Martyrumque prima rosa,
Virginumque lilium.

And at the Communion of the Mass of the Seven Dolours: 'Happy the senses of the Blessed Virgin

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

Mary which, without dying, earned the palm of martyrdom beneath the cross of our Lord.'

Who then, so well as the Virgin of Compassion, can reveal to us the depths of the mystery of the Passion? If only we too before death might have some small fragment of her knowledge of that mystery. At least we can long for it and pray with the church: 'O God, at whose passion, as Simeon foretold, the most sweet soul of Mary thy glorious Virgin Mother was pierced by a sword of sorrow, mercifully grant that we who reverently meditate upon her sorrows may reap the happy fruit of thy Passion.'²⁹

St. John of the Cross speaks, in the *Living Flame of Love*,³⁰ of the transfixion of the heart as a marvellous grace, granted to the small number of souls which have been faithful to love to the end and above all to those whose love and whose spirit are to be carried forward through the ages in a succession of sons; for, says the Mystical Doctor,

OUR LADY OF SORROWS

God deposits in the founders a richness of spiritual power capable of vivifying all the long line of their followers. It is as though their hearts must be pierced in order that the flood of grace may pour out for the enrichment of the rest.

The transfixion of the Virgin's heart is a mystery of love and suffering still higher and more radiant than the prodigious transfixion granted to St. Francis and St. Teresa. Erect at the foot of the Cross, the Virgin received, in that heart which was opening to the whole world, a spiritual love so strong and flaming and tender and universal that it could reach out to embrace every single one of those whom her Son had given to be her sons to the end of the earth and the end of time. Thus the transfixion of the Virgin's heart approached nearer than any other the Transfixion of the Heart of Jesus, the sole source of the world's redemption.

APPENDIX I

THE COM-PASSION OF OUR LADY

I. ICONOGRAPHY

M. EMILE MÂLE,³¹ studying the devotion to Our Lady's Sorrows from the point of view of its appearance in art, finds the first traces of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady in a French manuscript of the end of the fourteenth century. Already for a long time there had been devotion to the Joys of Our Lady. The seven sorrows are not at first a constant list. But the list as we now have it made its appearance early: (1) Simeon's Prophecy, (2) The Flight into Egypt, (3) The Disappearance of the Child Jesus, (4) The Carrying of the Cross, (5) The Crucifixion, (6) The Taking Down from the Cross, (7) The Placing in the Tomb.

APPENDIX I

A miniature of the period shows the Virgin with a sword in her heart. Towards the end of the fifteenth century, there are representations of the seven swords 'buried in Mary's breast and forming round her a sinister aureole'.³² These pictures are not of high artistic value, but this mode of representation is not condemned by the Liturgy.³³

2. HISTORY

The devotion to the Seven Sorrows developed considerably in Flanders at the end of the fifteenth century. Confraternities of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows were organized by Jean de Coudenberghe, secretary to Charles V. He gives our present list of sorrows, which by that time was fixed. He tells us that in those dark years, lovers of Our Lady recited a Pater and an Ave, meditating on each of the Seven Sorrows, and praying that the Virgin whose sufferings were changed into joy should change their own tears into rejoicings.³⁴

APPENDIX I

The literary treatment of the Devotion has been undertaken by Dom A. Wilmart, o.s.b., in a work entitled *Auteurs spirituels et textes dévots du moyen âge latin*.

Dom Wilmart establishes that the devotion to Our Lady's Joys came earlier, going back to the eleventh century. It was much in favour in the Middle Ages and gave rise to an abundant literature. It still remains, though under a rather different form, in the devotion to the Joyful and Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary.

To the five or seven Joys of Our Lady correspond the five or seven Sorrows. Dom Wilmart holds that the first traces of the devotion to Our Lady of Compassion are in St. Anselm in the eleventh century. He follows its progress to the twelfth century, then to the thirteenth, in St. Bonaventure and the Franciscan School.

He goes on to give four groups of texts which represent the peculiar effort of the fourteenth century to give a new literary form to the devotion.

APPENDIX I

These are prayers and meditations composed to recall the Seven *Sorrows*, the seven *pities*, or 'hours', the seven *sadnesses* of Mary during the Passion, and the seven *swords* that pierced her heart.

But it was the fifteenth century which was the age *par excellence* of the devotion.

3. LITURGY

The feast of the Compassion of Our Lady was celebrated at first in individual churches under different names — Compassion of the Virgin, Lamentation of the Virgin, Tears of the Virgin, Transfixion or Martyrdom of the Heart of the Virgin, Our Lady of Seven Dolours, Our Lady of Pity (and even Our Lady de Spasmo or Our Lady of the Swoon, *see* Appendix III). On April 22nd, 1423, a synod of the Province of Cologne had prescribed and indulgenced the feast of the Compassion, in reparation for the impieties of the Hussites. On April 22nd, 1727, this feast was

APPENDIX I

extended by Benedict XIII to the whole Church under the name of Feast of the Seven Dolours of the Blessed Virgin. This is the feast we celebrate on the Friday after Passion Sunday.

But the Servites had been permitted to celebrate a second feast in the year, in express commemoration of the Seven Sorrows. By a decree of September 18th, 1814, Pope Pius VII, freed from captivity shortly before, extended this second feast to the universal Church.³⁵ This is the origin of the September feast, first fixed for the third Sunday of the month, later transferred to September 15th. It is in the office of this second feast that the Seven Sorrows are enumerated. The mass is identical for the two feasts.

It is worth noting that as the custom had grown up among the Servites of representing Our Lady of Seven Dolours clad in a black mantle — the colour of their Order — the question was brought before the Sacred Congregation of Rites, February 21st, 1643. Opinions differed and the reply was

APPENDIX I

postponed. But certain consultors were of the opinion that it was unsuitable to clothe the Virgin in mourning, since she had borne her sorrows differently from other women.³⁶

A decree dated March 21st, 1744, gives permission for the statue of the Blessed Virgin to be shown in churches on the eve of Maundy Thursday clad in black and holding the body of Christ on her knees.³⁷

APPENDIX II

THE CO-REDEMPTRIX

1. 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple' (Luke xiv, 26). What Jesus is calling upon us to conquer is primarily, of course, whatever may be inordinate in the love of relations; and this may go further than is commonly thought. In any case the inordinate is the imperfect. The saints have eyes especially sharp for the discovery of imperfection, and they have followed these words of Our Lord with a docility that is frightening.

The prescriptions of the Gospel, repeated by the Saints, must be taken without any attempt at watering-down. They do not, of course, bear upon the *ontological reality* of love: we are not meant to destroy in ourselves all feelings of filial

APPENDIX II

affection and become hard and cold of heart. They bear upon the *element of self* that may be mingled with filial affection. We must keep no corner of our heart for ourselves. We must give our heart to God without reserve.

Then God Himself, master of our dearest feelings, will make us love our kinsfolk as we ought. The first uprooting of affection would be merely inhuman; the uprooting God wants of us is superhuman.³⁸

The blessed Virgin had from the first moment given every movement of her heart to God. In the very instant of the Incarnation she had renounced without reserve every possible element of self in her love for her Child. The ever more agonizing sacrifices demanded of her were not with the object of purifying her from the imperfections of her love, for there was in her no shadow of imperfection. Their sole end was to associate her with the redemptive suffering of her Son.

The suffering of Jesus was not directed to His

APPENDIX II

purification but to the redemption of the world. The sufferings of the Immaculate Virgin likewise were not for her purification: she could unite them with the sufferings that Jesus bore for the salvation of men. In this sense they were co-redemptive.

2. We must see both the likeness and the difference between the sufferings of Jesus and Mary.

First, note that Jesus' sufferings could not increase grace in His soul, whereas Mary's sufferings merited for her a progressive elevation in charity. But above all, note that His sufferings and hers were not redemptive in the same sense.

The sufferings of Jesus were the sufferings of One whom God had constituted the unique head of all humanity. Because of this, they were *primarily* and *of themselves* redemptive. Further, by reason of the infinite dignity of the person of Jesus, they had an *infinite* value; they constituted a superabundant atonement for the sins of all men and all ages.

APPENDIX II

The sufferings of Our Lady, needless to say, had only a *finite* value. Further, all their redemptive efficacy comes to them from the sufferings of Jesus. They are redemptive only *secondarily* and *by participation*. Jesus so loved the Virgin, made her so like to Himself, that He willed to communicate to her material sufferings something of the worth of His own; He willed that hers should be mingled with His and reckoned with His in compensation for the iniquity of men. God acts in a similar fashion, though to a lesser degree, in regard to very great saints whom He calls to suffer for the sins of others. St. Paul says that he rejoiced in his sufferings for the Colossians, adding the mysterious words, 'And fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for his body, which is the church' (Col. i, 24).

The Com-passion of Our Lady is thus united to the Passion of Our Lord in *reparation* for the sins of the whole world.

3. Nor is that all. The Compassion of Our Lady

APPENDIX II

is united to the Passion of Our Lord to *merit* the salvation of the whole world. Remember what merit is.

When man, acting freely under the divine motion, achieves that towards which God, in pure goodness, had destined him, we say there is merit.³⁹ Then if one considers the *divine motion* which proportions man to his goal, the merit is due in justice — it is called strict merit, condign merit; if one considers the consent of the *free will* moved by grace, it will be seen as suitable that God should grant his favours to the man who accepts the divine motion; this is the merit of congruity, not due in strict justice but founded upon the divine generosity and friendship.⁴⁰

In consequence, when a man under the motion of grace suffers for justice he becomes, if we consider the motion of grace, worthy to receive eternal salvation;⁴¹ and if we consider the consent of his free will it is fitting that God, by a condescension of friendship, should grant him his just

APPENDIX II

desires, for example the conversion of those he loves, provided these do not offer resistance to divine grace.⁴²

Thus when Our Lady, under the impulse of love, suffered with Christ, she became, if we consider the impulse that came from heaven, worthy to receive the salvation that came from heaven; and if we consider the consent of her free will, it was further fitting that God, by His liberality, should grant her profoundest desire which was the desire of her Son, namely the salvation of the world. Thus the Virgin merited *de condigno* her own salvation, *de congruo* the world's salvation. It is accurate to say in this sense that she laboured to merit for us the grace of redemption.

Yet Christ merited for us in a manner altogether higher. He was constituted head of the great body formed by the human race. All that He did under the permanent impulsion of love rendered Him worthy in justice to obtain salvation for all those

APPENDIX II

who are called to become members of His body — that is for all men. Thus He merited eternal life for us, not simply by a merit of congruity but by condign merit: that this merit may be applied to us, it only needs that we should not resist the grace that God sends us for our incorporation with Christ. Christ, and only Christ, has thus merited redemptive grace for us *de condigno*.

Thus we see how Our Lady can be called Co-Redemptrix, but only Christ can be called Redeemer.

This glorious title of Co-Redemptrix, and that of Mediatrix of all graces, which it implies, have been given her by the latest popes. On February 2nd, 1904, Pius X wrote in the encyclical *Ad diem*: 'In virtue of the communion of sorrows and of will which attached her to Christ, Mary wanted to become the worthy Reparatrix of the fallen world, and in consequence the Dispenser of all the graces Jesus acquired for us by His bloody death . . . Because she surpasses all other creatures

APPENDIX II

by her sanctity and by her union with Christ, and because she was called by Christ to participate in the work of our salvation, she merits for us *de congruo*, as the expression is, what Christ has merited for us *de condigno*, and she is the first steward in the dispensing of graces.'

Benedict XV writes similarly, March 22nd, 1918: 'When her Son suffered and died, she so to say suffered and died with Him, renouncing for the salvation of men and the appeasement of the justice of God her maternal rights over her Son — and immolating her Son, as much as in her lay, so that we are entitled to say that she, with Christ, has redeemed the human race.'

And Pius XI writes, February 2nd, 1923: 'The Virgin of Sorrows participated with Christ in the work of the Redemption.' The actual word Co-Redemptrix appears in two decrees of the Holy Office, dated June 26th, 1913, and January 22nd, 1914.⁴³

The consent Our Lady gave to the mystery of

APPENDIX II

the Cross was already contained in the *Fiat* she had uttered to the angel.

Speaking of this totally free acceptance Leo XIII quotes the great sentence of St. Thomas Aquinas according to which at the instant of the Annunciation, God waited for the Virgin to utter the consent of the human race in its entirety;⁴⁴ and he adds that in consequence none of that immense treasure of grace and truth which the Lord has brought us is communicated to us apart from Mary. He calls her our Mediatrix with the Mediator.⁴⁵

As we may see, the mystery of the Redemption stands in the Church like a great tree of doctrine which never ceases to flower.

APPENDIX III

'THE SWOON'

A PETITION having been addressed to Pope Julius II asking him to authorize and indulgence the feast *De spasmo Beatae Virginis Mariae* — the French title was Notre-Dame de la Pâmoison (our Lady of the Swoon) — which was being celebrated with an octave from Passion Sunday to Palm Sunday, the pope charged Cardinal Cajetan to examine the question whether such a feast could be accepted as canonical.

We have Cajetan's reply,⁴⁶ written at Rome and dated July 17th, 1506. Let it be said to the great theologian's glory, that if he was to be in error, some years later, in holding it as more probable that the Virgin was conceived with original sin, he deserved well of her in this present matter and showed the love he had vowed her.

APPENDIX III

He was against the idea of Our Lady swooning. First, because St. John describes her as 'standing' at the foot of the Cross. Then, because the Virgin like her Son could bear suffering without wavering. If it is true that she is full of grace, we must deny all the corporeal infirmities which are an obstacle to the plenitude and perfection of grace. If the Virgin had swooned, she would have been unable to remain constantly united to her Son by the loving grieving contemplation of the Passion. This sorrowful contemplation was the highest and holiest form that her Com-passion could take. After the suffering of Christ, that of His Mother was unquestionably the most intense that has ever been; but it did not diminish the full domination of the soul over the body and the feelings.

Cajetan concludes, therefore, while submitting his decisions to the judgment of the Holy See, that if it was desired to celebrate a feast of the Sorrows of Mary, this feast should not be called her 'Swoon'. Another name should be chosen and

APPENDIX III

another place assigned it in the liturgical calendar. The teaching Church has confirmed his judgment — completely as to the first point since it does not invoke Our Lady of the Swoon; and partially as to the second, since it limits the first feast of the Seven Sorrows to the Friday after Passion Sunday.

In his work *De festis Domini Nostri Jesu Christi, Beatae Mariae Virginis et quorundam Sanctorum*,⁴⁷ Benedict XIV, discussing this first feast of the Seven Sorrows, cites with approval Cajetan's treatment of the Swoon and criticizes the painters and preachers who make Our Lady's sorrows too much like those of women in general or who represent her as sunk deep in despair. He reminds us of the great phrase of St. Ambrose about Our Lady: 'She was not ignorant of the mystery that she had given birth to a child who was to rise from the dead.'⁴⁸

What St. Thomas Aquinas says commenting on St. Basil remains the last word: That while she was at the foot of the Cross and remembered past

APPENDIX III

glories — Gabriel's message, the ineffable revelation of the divine conception, the great series of miracles — the Blessed Virgin felt her soul 'fluctuate', for on the one hand she saw her Son in the depths of abjection, and on the other she remembered his triumphs.⁴⁹

NOTES

¹ R. Simeon, vir justus et timoratus, dixit ad Mariam.* Tuam ipsius animam pertransibit gladius. V. Ne vocetis me pulchram, sed amaram, quia amaritudine valde replevit me Omnipotens. Tuam.

² R. Surge, et accipe Puerum et Matrem ejus, et fuge in Ægyptum.* Et esto ibi, usquedum dicam tibi. V. Vocavi Filium meum ex Ægypto, ut veniat salus in Israel. Et.

³ Before she entered the Ursulines, Mother Marie de L'Incarnation lost her child who was not quite twelve. He was not brought back to her for three days: 'Oh God! I would never have believed that grief for the loss of a child should be so strongly felt by a mother. I had seen him ill almost to the point of death and was willing to give him to Our Lord with a good heart; but to know that he was lost, was something I could not understand. I remained throughout in a state of interior peace with Our Lord, but that did not blunt the pain of such a loss.' *Le Témoignage de Marie de L'Incarnation*. Paris, 1932, p. 126.

⁴ The literal translation is, 'About my father's business', but the meaning is 'With my father'.

⁵ R. Fili, quid fecisti nobis sic?* Ego et Pater tuus* Dolentes quaerebamus te. V. Quid est quod me quaerebatis? In his, quae patris mei sunt, oportet me esse. Ego. Gloria Patri. Dolentes.

NOTES

⁶ 'If Jesus on the Cross had to suffer the feeling of being forsaken by His Father, why should not the soul of Mary have known trials which plunged it into a sort of darkness?' Lagrange, *l'Évangile selon saint Luc*. Paris, 1928, p. 97.

⁷ Luke ii, 51: 'He belonged to them for some years more, accomplishing the highest and tenderest part of His work, the sanctification of Mary and Joseph. Yet at the same time he received much from them — a mystery that we are powerless to penetrate.' Lagrange, *l'Évangile de Jésus-Christ*. Paris, 1928, p. 49.

⁸ 'Ensuing upon this, seeing in imagination all that I had to suffer during the whole course of my life, all my body trembled though I did not then understand by that imaginary picture as I have done since by the effects which have followed.' *Vie de sainte Marguérite Marie*, par Elle-Même, 1924, p. 97.

⁹ Lagrange, *l'Évangile selon saint Luc*, p. 98.

¹⁰ Upon the word ἔλεγον, Père Lagrange writes: 'At first I translated it *they said*, but I think one must yield to Mr. Turner's arguments, *The Journal of Theological Studies*, xxv, p. 383.' *l'Évangile de Jésus-Christ*, p. 163.

¹¹ There is no need here to explain the meaning of the word 'brethren', for this has been done many times. Note only that it has the same meaning as in verse 21, 'His friends', or 'His relations'.

¹² Lagrange, *l'Évangile de Jésus-Christ*, p. 330.

¹³ It is clear, says Lagrange, that Jesus' reply 'is not

NOTES

a contradiction. It would have been hard indeed if He had told a woman that the care and tenderness of a mother count for nothing. It took a Calvin to attribute such a sentiment to Our Lord.' *l'Évangile selon saint Luc*, p. 336.

¹⁴ 'An interpreter must neither falsify the natural sense of the words, nor consider the words alone without reference to the context and, one may add, the situation. The Arabs of Palestine still frequently use the phrase *ma-lech*, quid tibi? The whole meaning of the phrase is in the accent with which it is spoken. Sometimes it means "Mind your own business"; sometimes, with a smile, "Leave it to me, all will be well". Now it is clear from the whole narrative that this second manner was the one used at Cana, with more dignity in the tone, but also one may take it with more affection in the accent.' Lagrange, *l'Évangile selon saint Jean*, 1925, p. 56.

¹⁵ 'The astonishing thing is that Mary seemed to count on the miracle happening. We are in the presence of a mother who knows her son's heart. More attentive perhaps to the tone of voice, the look, the accent, than to the actual meaning of the words, she was convinced that He would be able to harmonize His duty with the desire to please her.' Lagrange, *l'Évangile selon saint Jean*, p. 57.

¹⁶ Lagrange, *l'Évangile selon saint Jean*, p. 489.

¹⁷ R. Jesum bajulantem sibi Crucem* Sequebatur turba mulierum, quae plangebant et lamentabantur

NOTES

eum. *V.* Filiae Jerusalem, super vos ipsas flete et super filios vestros. Sequebatur.

¹⁸ *R.* Postquam venerunt in locum, qui dicitur Calvariae, ibi crucifixerunt eum;* Stabat autem juxta Crucem Jesu Mater eius. *V.* Tunc beatam illius animam doloris gladius pertransivit. Stabat.

¹⁹ In spite of the artists of the Quattrocento — even Angelico, whose devotion to Our Lady was, none the less, deeply comprehending.

²⁰ St. Anselm had already used these words. Cf. Wilmart, *Auteurs spirituels et textes dévots du moyen âge latin*, p. 506.

²¹ *Sermo de duodecim praerogativis B.V. Mariae*, P. L., t. clxxxiii, col. 438.

²² Lagrange, *L'Évangile de Jésus-Christ*, p. 577.

²³ *R.* Joseph ab Arimathaea* Petiit corpus Jesu, quod, de Cruce depositum,* suo complexu Mater excepit. *V.* Dolens Sunamitis sinu et genibus susi sustinuit mortuum filium. Petiit. Gloria Patri. Suo.

²⁴ *R.* Quis tibi sensus fuit, o Mater dolorum,* Dum Joseph sindone Filium tuum involvit, et posuit eum in monumento? *V.* Considerate et videte, si est dolor sicut dolor meus. Dum.

²⁵ In spite of fifteenth-century French sculptures which invariably show her close to collapse supported by St. John.

²⁶ Luke xxiii, 54. 'Since the Jews have come back to Jerusalem (1919) it may be said that the sabbath *shines* on Friday evening; all — even those with no religious

NOTES

belief — vie with one another in zeal for these illuminations.' Lagrange, *l'Évangile selon saint Luc*, p. 596.

²⁷ R. In toto corde tuo gemitus Matris tuae ne obliviscaris,* Ut perficiatur propitiatio et benedictio. V. Ave, princeps generosa, Martyrumque prima rosa, Virginumque lilium. Ut. Gloria Patri. Ut.

²⁸ St. Thomas, *Suppl.*, qu. 96, a. 6, ad 4.

²⁹ Collect for the Feast of the Seven Dolours.

³⁰ *Obras de San Juan de la Cruz*, Silverio de Santa Teresa, t. iv, p. 33 (and p. 138).

³¹ *L'Art religieux à la fin du moyen âge*, p. 22.

³² Ibid.

³³ Cf. Benedict XIV. *De festis Domini Nostri Jesu Christi, Beatae Mariae Virginis et quorumdam Sanctorum*, lib. II, cap. 4, fin.

³⁴ [H. Delehaye, S.J.] *La Vierge aux sept glaives*, in *Analecta Bollandiana*, 1893, p. 344.

³⁵ *Decreta authentica Congregationis Sacrorum Rituum*, Rome, 1900, vol. III, p. 281, no. 385.I.

³⁶ Ibid., vol. I, p. 177, no. 824.

³⁷ Ibid., vol. II, p. 85, no. 2375, ad 4.

³⁸ Cf. Jacques Maritain, Preface to *St. John of the Cross*, by Père Bruno.

³⁹ St. Thomas, 1a 11ae, qu. 114, a. 1.

⁴⁰ Ibid., a. 3.

⁴¹ Ibid., 111a, qu. 48, a. 1.

⁴² Ibid., 1a 11ae, qu. 114, a. 6.

⁴³ For all these texts, see Denz, 1928, no. 3034 and note 4.

⁴⁴ 111a, qu. 30, a. 1.

NOTES

- ⁴⁵ Denz, 1928, no. 3033.
- ⁴⁶ *Opuscula*, t. II, tract 13.
- ⁴⁷ Lib. II, cap. 4.
- ⁴⁸ *De institutione virginis*, cap. 7; P. L., t. xvi, col. 318.
- ⁴⁹ St. Thomas, IIIa, qu. 27, a. 4, ad 3.