

THE EXULTATIONS OF MARY

I.

My soul has exulted before God, my Saviour. Exult again and again, Mary, because you give to the world the joy of its salvation.

Rejoice, O Immaculate Mother, because you preserve the honor of virginity.

Exult with happiness, virgin made mother, because you preserve the honor of virginity, from the maledictions which weigh upon women.

You can surely rejoice before God. Him whom the earth and heaven united, could not contain, you have within you.

You warm Him in your arms, you place Him joyfully in His crib, you alone, Mother, can adore Jesus, your Son, born of you in time, He who, before you, before all time, possesses God as Father from all eternity.

You alone fulfill the duties of a mother to the God who confers maternity on you.

You alone can truly exult in Him who renders you sublime and heavenly.

II.

Let heaven and earth praise you, Mary, let every creature re-echo your praises!

Let my whole being rejoice in your presence, let my soul exalt you, beloved mother!

The tongue is powerless to speak of your grandeurs, and the spirit to conceive the wonder of you.

Thus, I can only bow before you humbly and say to you prayerfully: receive me in your arms, O my Mother, listen with love to the sighs of my heart, and receive with me all who are mine.

My soul is breathless at the sight of Jesus, since it knows that in Him alone is found its happiness.

Show me this mysterious treasure which you keep hidden within you, Mary!

Yes, I believe that He is the only-begotten Son of the Father, and I also believe that He is your first-born, mysteriously born of your virginity.

I know that He is my God, my Saviour, and my Father, and I know that He chose you for His mother,

Oh! I wish through you to see Him, your Son, and I wish to adore Him in your arms.

O Mother, you have clothed Him in your flesh. Hence He can not be seen without your aid.

And if you do not deign to show Him to us, who will ever merit to look upon Him?

Through you alone we have access to the Son, and through the Son we shall reach the Father.

Therefore, show me Jesus: He satisfies my soul. I do not seek nor desire a Father other than Jesus, your Son, my Saviour and my God.

O Mother, I have longed with such desire to see Jesus whom you love more than all others!

My soul sighs and longs to contemplate Him, my heart rejoices and seeks to possess Him!

If you wish with Mary to see Jesus, you must, first of all, have pure eyes.

If you wish with Mary to see Jesus, you must, secondly, be holy and pious.

If you wish with Mary to see Jesus, you must, finally, abandon the earth and strive to rise, little by little, to heaven.

III. Prayer:

O Mary, I know my sins and my failings. I know that I am unworthy to see Jesus,

But I am unable to rest until I have contemplated Him.

CHAPTER XIV

MARY'S LOVE AND SORROW

I.

The Infant Jesus remained at Jerusalem after the Pasch and was lost; and His parents did not at first perceive it on their return.

Oh unexpected change! oh mystery! Would it not have been better to remain at Nazareth and not to lose the Child while traveling?

Truly so, because to lose Jesus is to have lost more than the whole universe and all that it contains.

Alas! how could there be a festival for the parents experiencing so harrowing a trial.

For there is no misfortune more dreadful for the sad and afflicted, than to lose that which may alone serve as a consolation to them.

Only those who know what it is to love are able to comprehend the depth of the Virgin Mary's grief in this trial.

Much more willingly she might have remained in solitude, hidden at Nazareth, rather than present herself in Jerusalem so as to appear in the Temple for the solemnities.

But she, the Mother of the Law, wished to observe fully the customs and the law in order to give us an example of obedience. Besides, she left her home and her village thus to present herself according to the prescribed custom at Jerusalem with Jesus and Joseph.

II.

Likewise, it was to give us a model of patience in grief that God permitted Mary to lose her Son, that after having lost Him she might seek Him weeping; that she might find Him only after three days, and that after having found Him, she might more joyfully take back with her her Treasure.

Let none dare to rely upon himself as if he possessed Christ alone for himself.

Let no one scorn others, for he knows not if he himself is pleasing to God.
Thus Jesus remains hidden for many and manifests Himself only to a few.

He showed His Divinity when He wished, and when He wished He hid Himself, acting always with a purpose and for a reason.

To lose Jesus is not always astonishing; but I feel that it is a misfortune for me, a misfortune alas, deeply felt in my heart. I recognize, however, that it is through my fault, and that I often deserve still greater affliction because I have not always known how to watch over my heart.

I have been full of negligence and lukewarmness. Thus have I lost the grace of my God and I do not know who shall ever be able to return it to me.

III. Prayer:

Come then to my aid in this great sorrow, O Mother of God and Mother of Mercy.

Help me, divine Mistress Mary, you who give access in heaven to Life. I seek in you peace and happiness.

You know how sorrowful it is to lose Jesus, and also how sweet to find Him again.

If this trial was sent to you, Mary, to you who were sinless, what wonder if it is imposed upon me who so often have offended my God?

What must I do to find Jesus again?

Oh, if there is for me any hope of finding Him once more, it is in your help that I have placed my hope, O Mary.

It is in your aid and in your merits, you who are more cherished and nearer to Him than any one else.

Teach me then to seek my Beloved until I have found Him. O Mary, accompany me yourself.

Then shall I chant joyously with you: "Congratulate me for I have found my Beloved, the Beloved of my heart, He for whom my soul longs."

(Finding of Jesus in the Temple, Sermon II)

HOMILY

SUFFERING AND LOVE

To love is to suffer, says Ecclesiastes. However the only thing that one seeks in love is to not suffer, or rather, in true love is to not make the beloved to suffer.

I. But in order to love truly it is requisite to know how to suffer royally. Mary can be our model in this delicate art which sculptures the soul, so to speak, like the blows of a hammer fashion a work of art in marble. Who more than she has loved? Who has suffered more?

II. How has she suffered? As queen, as mother, and as woman; with dignity, with patience, with amenity. To know how to understand the griefs of Mary is to know how to imitate them. One word translates well this state, it is the word, compassion. If Jesus has suffered and undergone His Passion, Mary has known, near to Him, the union in His sufferings and His Passion; this is compassion.

III. Let us retain this word in our life. Let us keep this example before our eyes. Let us know how to suffer and to love like Mary and with Mary.

MEDITATION

MATERNAL LOVE

There is no gentler love; there is no stronger love. But is this indeed love? This is more than love, in the common meaning of this word; but it is also less than love.

Maternal love is born of love itself; it is as the flower and the fruit. But love itself is the root and trunk of this beautiful tree which embellishes the earthly paradise.

Love is, furthermore, very beautiful and very attractive only by the fruits which it brings forth and the flowers which it causes to bloom in the soul of the father and mother.

Paternity and maternity are inherent in all love which is born in the heart of man and woman. It is this which enlarges and

elevates this beautiful sentiment and this powerful drive, which nothing on earth resists. Mary knew more than any other mother, the force and tenderness of this love. Joseph knew all its delicacies and felt all its charms.

Practice: To love Mary as one loves one's mother.

Thought: Immaculate Heart of Mary, I love you!

CHAPTER XV

SEEKING CHRIST AFTER THE COUNSELS OF MARY

I.

Listen to my advice, imitate my example, O my son, and you will be consoled.

If it happens sometimes that you lose Christ, do not despair, do not give up, do not cease to give yourself in prayer, do not seek earthly consolation; remain in solitude and weep for yourself; then only will you find Jesus once again, you will find Him in the temple of your heart.

No, it is not at the crossroads of the city, nor in the gatherings of those who amuse themselves, nor among earthly reunions, that Jesus is found; but certainly only in the midst of the just, and in the company of the saints.

II.

It is in tears, O my son, that you must seek Him whom you have lost in pleasures.

It is by faithful service that you must attract Him whom you have deserted by negligence.

It is by humility that you must recall Him whom you have driven afar by pride.

It is by prayer that you must draw Him who does not listen to a heedless heart.

It is with fear and trembling that you should pray to Him who loves not pride and laziness.

It is with gratitude that you should praise Him who is ever ready to give His grace.

It is with an ardent love that you must love Him who loves everyone and pardons everyone, who gives His graces to all without regret, who has never abandoned anyone.

III. Prayer:

O Mary, O Mother, when the gates of heaven are closed because of my sins, when on all sides entrance is forbidden to me, when all strength and all counsel abandon me, when I am

unable to aid myself in anything, when the weariness of life and grief of heart overwhelm me to the point of no longer loving anything, when the sun of joy is changed into a night of mourning, when consolations from on high vanish, and when despair presses in upon me from every part, when the wind of temptations arises, and the waves of passion grow stronger, when illness itself overpowers me, when all adversities gather and fight against me, where shall I flee and to whom shall I turn, if it is not to you, Mary, who alone knows how to console the unfortunate and to succour the wretched? Toward whom then shall I turn to attain unhindered, the haven of salvation, to whom if not to you, Mary, Star of the Sea, who shines always in the firmament, who always offers the flaming torch of grace.

(Soliloquy of the Soul, Chap. VI)

HOMILY

BOREDOM AND SORROW IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

I. Life is a strange mixture of joys and sadnesses. To him who knows how to weigh everything well, it seems that joy is superior to sadness. But boredom and sorrows leave in the human heart a sharper imprint than does joy, besides we feel them with greater keenness. The more tender and delicate the heart is, the more keen are its sufferings. Mary, who possessed a nature more refined than any other creature, must have felt physical griefs and moral sufferings with greater sharpness.

II. Anguish, terror, fright, fear, disquietude, boredom, all the griefs of the heart met in her from Bethlehem to Calvary. All the sufferings, poverty, worries, abandonment, long waits, disturbing vigils, all the sorrows of a mother's heart came to assail her. She bore them all with firmness, calmness, and serenity.

III. There is no lesson more engaging for us, there is no model more consoling. Let us look at Mary. Let us listen to Mary, our Mother and exemplar.

MEDITATION

DISQUIETUDE AND WORRY

Among the sorrows of the heart, disquietude and worry are the two most frequent and the two most painful for us and also for those who surround us.

The disturbed person is capable of nothing: *irrequietus*, said the Latins, that is to say, without basis and without support. The worrier is absorbed by his worry and sees nothing else.

To cure one's self of the malady, it is first of all necessary to know how to reflect and to think, and secondly to will and to act. Work, better than anything else, dissipates worries. Besides, it procures a recovery through the result obtained by effort.

Effort: everything depends on it in the life of the soul as in the life of the body; *age quod agis*, do well what you do, said the Proverb from experience, and you will succeed.

Who better than Mary could give us a model and a lesson? Study her; imitate her.

Practice: Never to allow our cares or worries to appear, but to show ourselves ever serene before the world.

Thought: Let us be to others as we would wish to see them be to us.

CHAPTER XVI

THE GRIEFS AND SUFFERINGS OF MARY

I.

Mary did not live a single day without suffering; nevertheless in the midst of her greatest sufferings she was never without consolation.

Every grief borne for Jesus brings to the soul sweetness and joy. The more we suffer under the weight of the blows, the more we merit the favors of grace.

Yes, Mary suffered, and suffered sorrowfully, because of the sins of the great mass of men.

She suffered in like measure with the just, with those tried by temptations and troubles.

She suffered for the ingratitude of men to whom God sent His Son in order to reopen the lost Paradise; and for the obstinate loss of the wicked who prefer to heaven things of this earth, and who refuse to listen to the Word of God.

She suffered to see the just oppressed; the impious, far from God, everywhere victorious; the poor scorned and the rich exalted. She suffered to see in all places lukewarmness brought to the service of God, and the haste which offended Him.

She suffered to see the world given over to evil, refusing to turn its eyes toward the light that God Himself came to bring into the world.

These sorrows were like piercing blades sheathed in this Mother's compassionate heart.

Yet, she was patient - always, suffering in silence a life of martyrdom, weeping for the salvation of men.

II.

If you wish to look deeper into her life, you will see what she suffered at the Passion. Meditating on her life you will find that she tasted as many draughts of bitterness as moments lived by Jesus upon this earth, and as many as He had members transpierced on the Cross. When had Jesus suffered an

injury without Mary having felt its fulfillment? If she suffered severely when she lost Him for a few days in the Temple, how much more keenly must she have agonized when she saw Him dying, nailed to the Cross?

It is a fact known by all hearts which live, that a mother's love surpasses in compassion all known loves and affections. If, therefore, you wish to penetrate deeply the sorrow of the mother in Mary, think of the excellence and the depth of her virginal love.

III. Prayer:

Come, O Mary, tender and gentle Mother, to pay a visit to my soul in its tribulation.

You alone can give peace, for you alone know how to bring sweetness to the sufferings of the heart. Come, extend your hand to the fallen servant, come, lift him up again by grace. Hasten, O Mary, chosen Mother of God, to show to us all once more the abundance of your piety.

You see me, fallen so low, yet I have not forgotten you, nor shall I ever forget you, O my Mother.

(Sermon to the Novices, Sermon XXV)

HOMILY

SICKNESS AND SUFFERING

I. Among human sorrows, illness has sufferings and sadnesses like to no others. It destroys the body at the same time that it gnaws at the soul. Mary knew, at the foot of the Cross, the most agonizing suffering and the most violent torment. We do not read that she suffered illness properly so-called. Her immaculate body should not have experienced our infirmities. Death itself was for Mary a dormition rather than a consumption.

II. But if Mary did not suffer illness, she had to endure all other sufferings: rendings of the heart, the bitterness of separation, the anguish of uncertainty. Let us learn from her to bear them courageously, if not lovingly. It is necessary to possess the soul of Mary and the heart of St. Therese in order to say with faith: "Either to suffer or to die." More willingly we say: "To live and to rejoice."

III. Let us ask Mary, Queen, Virgin and Martyr, as the Church calls her, to tell us to bear the sorrows of illness with the calmness of a queen, with the gentleness of a virgin, with the strength of a martyr.

MEDITATION

GRIEFS OF THE HEART

The griefs of the heart are sometimes those which are self-created. They are, at other times, imposed upon us. They always rend and harm both body and soul.

It is in these circumstances that it is necessary to know how to look on high, to look to the cross and to look to Mary at the foot of the Cross.

Stabat: Mary stood and did not succumb, St. John tells us. This is a model and a support. Mary is a mother who gives both

example and strength to him who knows how to contemplate her.

Practice: To offer to Mary the sufferings and agonies of the heart.

Thought: Immaculate Heart of Mary, make my heart like yours.

THE BITTERNESS OF MARY

I.

She remained alone at the foot of the Cross, she stood alone, Mary, the Mother of Jesus, as the Apostle tells us in his divine account.

After the memory of the Cross of Jesus, the most beautiful memory is that of Mary, His Mother, who alone had the courage to remain standing near her Son dying on the Cross, dying to save the world from death.

O moving spectacle of Mother and Son:

of the Mother who suffers, and the Son who consoles;
of the Mother who weeps and the Son who smiles;
of the Mother who remains standing near the Cross, and
of the Son attached to that same Cross;
of the Mother who sighs and the Son who dies.

O immensity of grief, worthy to remain ever imprinted in the heart of Christians.

II.

Pilate wrote on wood for the Cross, this title: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.

You also write, but write on your heart this title, against the derisions of men and against the subtle assaults of the devil. By the sheer force of this Name you will be delivered from all the attacks of the wicked.

Act thus and engrave in your heart this title of Jesus, suspended on the Cross. You will then find near you Mary, standing as at the Cross, interceding for you in time of temptation and at the hour of death.

III.

No mother in this world in giving birth to a beloved child felt a happiness equal to that of Mary, who alone had for a Son the same Son as God.

No mother experienced a sorrow equal to that of Mary, at the death of her Son. Mary had to suffer in her compassion all the sorrows of her Son in the Passion.

Indeed she stood near the Cross in tears, her heart feeling at every grief the pain of a sword which transpierced it with bitterness.

It was truly a marvel that she was able to support in her virginal body a like suffering; for her soul experienced at each torture, a torture equal to that of her Son.

O ineffable martyrdom, ineffable grief of a mother, more cruelly agonized in her heart at the sight of her dying Son, than a martyr in his body overwhelmed by torment.

IV. Prayer:

O Mother, I know that I am not worthy to lift my eyes to your admirable face, to this holy face haloed by glory, which the angels of heaven wonder at on their knees. You appear to me, O Mother, as adorned with deep-hued roses and foliage of gold, and I remain frightened by my impurity.

However, O Mary, because of your goodness I retain in spite of everything, the assured hope of obtaining once more the grace of pardon if you deign to intercede again for me.

What may I wish, expect, or desire to obtain from the most indulgent of mothers, as from the most compassionate of virgins, if it is not pardon and consolation in the calmness and joy of a sincere repentance?

(Monastic Enchiridion, Chap. V)

HOMILY

SUFFERINGS AND TEARS

I. The Gospel which speaks to us often of Mary's sufferings, never says that she wept; it does say it however of Jesus, *lacrymatus est*. Mary, too, must have wept. Tears are an alleviation of the heart. But tears ought not to cast one down.

II. To suffer is a science. It requires a heart which feels grief very strongly, which bleeds and which exalts, but which knows how to conquer itself and to submit itself to reason and to faith.

III. O Mary, be our model in sufferings and in tears! Be also our support and our consolation.

MEDITATION

ENNUI AND LASSITUDE

Nothing is more deplorable in the spiritual life as in natural life, than ennui. Nothing is more weakening and nothing is more discouraging than this feeling. It is necessary, at any price, to struggle against this encroachment which little by little destroys life itself and which renders it painful to itself and to others. Ennui engenders lassitude and lassitude produces inertia and death.

A soul which is weary is a soul which does not act. To fight ennui, first of all it is requisite to work. The Latins call ennui by a name which recalls death: *taedium*.

Let us flee this as one flees a plague which threatens to communicate itself. Thus is Mary called in Scripture, the Mother of holy joy: *Mater sanctae laetitiae*.

Practice: Never to make others feel the difficulties we may have.

Thought: O Mary, be our happiness and our joy: *causa nostrae laetitiae*.

CHAPTER XVIII

HOW TO SUFFER
AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF MARY

I.

If you truly love your mother Mary, and if you truly desire her patronage in the midst of your own tribulations, remain with her standing near the Cross.

Share with a full heart in her mother's sorrows and in the sorrows of Christ, her beloved Son: she will then be near you at the hour of death.

He who often and lovingly meditates on the sorrows borne by Jesus, and on the tears shed by His mother, can have full confidence in the mercy and pity of God, and likewise in His affection and in that of His divine Mother!

Oh! how happy at the hour of death will be that soul which on every day of its life loved deeply both Jesus and Mary, and each day found its place near the Cross, in union with Jesus and Mary!

II.

Happy the one who, scorning all earthly consolation, chose in this life Mary for his consolation and his mother.

There is no doubt that at the hour of his death, this mother will say to her Son the blessed and gentle word that consoles the poor and helps the orphan.

III.

If you love Jesus, come, take up His cross; walk with the cross; remain near the cross; embrace this cross and do not forsake it until you have arrived near the One who gives the glory to the cross.

If you wish in your trials, in spite of the sorrow, to find some consolation, go to Mary at once both virgin and mother, to the mother who watches near the cross; to the virgin who weeps at the foot of the cross.

All suffering will then disappear for you, or at least, will seem lighter and more bearable compared to the griefs of the Virgin Mary.

IV. Prayer:

I come again to ask you Mary, Mother of God and my mother, to be willing to look upon me favorably, and to consider me with a compassionate heart, now, in the future, and at the hour of death.

Receive me as a son under your protection; enfold me maternally in your arms at all times, but especially at my last hour. Remember me, and come to my aid, you who are my sovereign and my mother.

Console my soul affrighted at itself, O you, my sole hope in my tribulations.

Defend it against the assaults of the demon, so that he will never dare to approach it, in the presence of you who deign to visit it.

Obtain for me, Mary, I plead with you, through your pious intercession pardon and indulgence from your Son, whom I have so often and so greatly, alas! offended by my faults and my sins.

(Garden of Roses, Chap. IV)

HOMILY

ENDURANCE AND RESIGNATION

I. There are in man two forces, a positive which is action, and a negative which is resignation. To endure without weakening necessitates resignation. But the resignation ought not to be an oppression; resignation is a virtue, and weakness is a defect.

II. You must know how to suffer and be resigned, but like Mary, with strength and magnanimity, that is to say, with a great soul and a great will. Suffering thus borne purifies and does not weaken one. Do we know how to suffer thus?

III. Let us ask Mary to teach it to us, to support us in the apprenticeship of life. Patience, in the original sense of the word, means the science of suffering. Let us ask for this science through the intercession of our Mother.

MEDITATION

An undesirable character is an illness; the spirit which is subject to bad humor is ill and communicates to the body its illness.

An undesirable character is variable, cross-grained, changeable, capricious, and brutal. It lacks poise and circumspection.

A character, on the contrary, becomes good when it is strong, well-balanced, constant, unvariable. Not to change with every wind is to possess strength of character, it is to approach God who is immutable in goodness.

To make firm your character, it is necessary to refine your spirit and to harden your body to suffering. *Fortiter agi et pati*, said the Stoics. The Christian, marked by the cross, should know better how to say this, and still better how to practice it.

Practice: Render your character tractable by accustoming yourself to prompt obedience.

Thought: To act always forcefully and energetically: *Fortiter age*.