

The Sorrowful Mysteries

1. The Agony in the Garden (Mt 26:36-44; Mk 14:32-42; Lk 22:40-46; Jn 12:27; Heb 5:7-8)

Jesus has come to his long awaited 'hour'. He, the author of life, through whom all things were created, faces the abyss. He is the epitome of the just man in the psalms of lament, persecuted by enemies, praying for deliverance. The psalms spoke of him—as our Lord told his disciples after the resurrection—and he, in turn, prayed the psalms and made them his own. Many of them can be put on his lips during his Passion, as the Church does in her liturgy of Holy Week. It has been said that the Gospel narrates these events from the outside, while the psalms convey his inner torment:

The cords of death encompassed me,
the torments of perdition assailed me;
the cords of Sheol entangled me,
the snares of death confronted me.
In my distress I called upon the Lord;
to my God I cried for help (Ps 17/18:4-6).

Deliver me, O Lord, from my enemies!
I have fled to thee for refuge!
Teach me to do thy will,
For thou art my God! (Ps 142/143:9-10).

The Fathers of the Church teach that Christ's agony proves the reality of the Incarnation, the authenticity of the human nature which the Word had assumed: his sufferings were real. They also emphasize that he was suffering as the Head, on behalf of his members, in order to heal them. St Cyril of Alexandria writes:

Only the death of the Saviour could bring an end to death, and it is the same for the other sufferings of the flesh too. Unless he had felt dread, human nature could not have become free from dread. Unless he had experienced grief, there could never have been any deliverance from grief. Unless he had been troubled and alarmed, there would have been no escape from these feelings. Every one of the emotions to which human nature is liable can be found in Christ. The emotions of his flesh were aroused, not that they might gain the upper hand, as indeed they do in us, but in order that when aroused they might be thoroughly subdued by the power of the Word dwelling in the flesh. Human nature itself was thus changed for the better.¹

A twentieth-century Carmelite priest writes of St John's understanding of the 'Word made flesh':

...in this same sacrificial flesh, he discovers the mystery of suffering and the redemptive fecundity of self-immolating love. John knows that henceforth there will never be in this world a physical suffering, a moral agony, an abasement or a humiliation which cannot be referred to the humanity of the Incarnate Word. There it will find its justification, its meaning, and even its transfiguration through a union with Him who has assumed them all in His love.²

Our Lord persevered in prayer, instructing us to do likewise to gain the grace we need: 'Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak' (Mt 26:41). The Fathers comment on this:

We do well to watch heedfully and pray earnestly 'lest we enter into temptation.' For if Christ does not grant us grace, then the Judas in us betrays. If he departs a little way from us, the Peter in us sleeps. (St Jerome)³

¹ St Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 8.

² Paul-Marie de la Croix OCD, *The Biblical Spirituality of St John*, p.103.

³ St Jerome, *Homily* 84.

Let us, however, not take premature comfort in the Lord's acknowledgement of the weakness of the flesh. For note that he declared first of all that the spirit is willing. He wanted to show which one ought to be subject to the other: the flesh is called to be submissive to the spirit, the weaker to the stronger, so that the flesh may draw strength from the spirit. (Tertullian).⁴

Moreover, in his agony Jesus gives us the example of *how* to pray, embodying one of the central petitions of the *Our Father*— 'Thy will be done', subordinating his human will to the divine. Thus, St Ambrose exhorts us: 'Learn that you are subject to God, so that you may choose not what you want yourself but what you know will be pleasing to God.'⁵ And St John Chrysostom: 'He teaches us that if ever we are in agony and dread, we should not shrink back from what is set before us.'⁶

Not only did Jesus give us the example of saying 'yes' to God, but he also did it on our behalf, making it possible for us to do the same. In the garden of Gethsemane, the second Adam reversed the rebellion and fall of the first Adam in the garden of Eden to bring him back into his own garden again.

Thus, the bitter chalice which Christ feared to drink— even more than the prospect of intense physical suffering and death—was the full weight of man's rebellion against God. It was the horror and filth of every age, all the sins of every person, including mine and yours. This confrontation between good and evil, light and darkness, overwhelmed our Lord's human soul: 'Thy wrath has swept over me; thy dread assaults destroy me'(Ps 87/88:16); 'My heart is broken within me'(Jer 23:9) and pours forth blood as sweat. As St John Henry Newman describes it:

He cries to the Father as if he were the criminal, not the victim; His agony takes the form of guilt and compunction. He is doing penance, He is making confession, with a reality and virtue infinitely greater than that of all saints and penitents together; for He is the one Victim for us all, the sole Satisfaction, the real Penitent, all but the real sinner.⁷

'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me...(Mt 26:39).In numerous places in the Scriptures, 'cup' is used to denote divine punishment for sinners. For example:

For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup,
with foaming wine well mixed;
and he will pour a draught from it,
and all the wicked of the earth shall drink it down to the dregs.
(Ps 74/75:8 see also Jer25:15; Is 51:17; Rev 14:9-10)

It is Christ alone who saves us from the full weight of divine justice (Cf Rom5:9; 1 Thess 1:10). Through his drinking of this chalice, the cup of the wrath of God has become the cup of his blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins, the cup of salvation. 'What shall I render to the Lord for all his bounty to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord' (Ps115/116:12-13).

2. *The Scourging at the Pillar* (Mt 27:24; Mk 15:15; Lk 22:63; Jn 19:1).

'So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas; and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified' (Mk 15:15). This was done in accordance with Roman law which decreed that whoever is to be crucified must first be beaten with whips. It also fulfilled the prophetic writings: 'I gave my back to

⁴ Tertullian, *To the Martyrs*, 4.1.

⁵ St Ambrose, *Exposition on the Gospel of Luke*, 10.60.

⁶ St John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, 67.2.

⁷ St John Henry Newman, *Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregations*, xvi, Mental Sufferings of Our Lord in His Passion.

the smiters' (Is 50:6); 'The wicked have wrought upon my back: they have prolonged their iniquity' (Ps 128:3, Vulgate).

A sixth-century Byzantine melodist, Romanus Melodus, poetically highlights the dreadful irony of this torture:

Like a lion they roared to seize the life of the lamb, Christ.
Pilate, fulfilling their will, flogged Thee, the gentle one.
So he set to work on Thy back ...
The Redeemer endured the lash; the Deliverer was in chains;
Naked and stretched out on a pillar,
Is He who in a pillar of cloud formerly spoke to Moses and Aaron (Ex 33:8-11).
He who established the pillars of the earth, as David said, (Ps 74:4-5) is fastened to a pillar.
He who showed the people the road in the desert,
(For the pillar of fire appeared before them [Ex 13:21; Num 9:15-23]),
He has been attached to a pillar.⁸

St Cyril of Alexandria likewise underlines the horror of what was inflicted on the Lord of creation; and his patient endurance.

'When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly' (1Pet 2:23). We should say what the holy prophets said about certain men, 'Be appalled, O heavens, at this, be shocked, be utterly desolate, says the Lord' (Jer 2:12). He is the Lord of earth and heaven, the Creator and Architect of all, the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is of surpassing greatness in glory and majesty, the foundation of everything, and that in which all things exist and remain. All things exist in him (Col 1:17). He is the breath of all the holy spirits in heaven. This One is despised as one of us, patiently endures beatings, and submits to the ridicule of the wicked. He offers himself to us as a perfect pattern of patience. He rather reveals the incomparable greatness of his godlike gentleness.⁹

We were the cause of his sufferings: 'he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed' (Is 53:5).

It was particularly to expiate our sins of the flesh, and to teach us that the flesh must be brought into subjection to the spirit, that the pure flesh of the Innocent one was thus cruelly torn. St Paul admonishes us: 'If you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live' (Rom 8:13). Hence, to restore the right order lost in the Fall, we need both to embrace voluntary penance and to accept the afflictions that divine providence decrees for us. In this way, we will share in Christ's sufferings and atone for our sins, as St Bonaventure exhorts us:

All this contains a moral lesson. It teaches us how to bear with courageous patience the scourgings inflicted by our blessed Father, as our Lord Jesus most sweet so patiently bore for us unworthy ones the scourgings of the iniquitous. Seeing how the 'King of kings and Lord of lords' (1Tim 6:15), Jesus most loving, who was free from all sin and in whose mouth no deceit was found, is martyred by such savage stripes, what scourges would a man refuse to suffer, born as he is to labour (Cf Job 5:7), nurtured in sin, living in sin, yet destined to inherit the heavenly kingdom unto which none but the pure attain? O man foolish and without understanding, hear and be instructed. Far from trying to flee the discipline, you should rather embrace it, lest you perish from the way of righteousness in the face of the wrath of your Lord, 'who has not spared even His own Son but has delivered Him' to be scourged for you.¹⁰

⁸Romanus Melodus, *Kontakion on the Passion of Christ*, 20.13-14.

⁹St Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Luke*, Homily 150.

¹⁰ St Bonaventure, *The Mystical Vine*, Chapter 22.

St Peter also urges us to endure harsh treatment meekly, even when it is least deserved, perhaps when seriously misjudged or falsely accused:

For one is approved if, mindful of God, he endures pain while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it, if when you do wrong and are beaten for it you take it patiently? But if when you do right and suffer for it you take it patiently, you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps (1Pet 2:19-21).

3. The Crowning with Thorns (Mt 27:27-31; Mk 15:16-20; Jn 19:2-5)

At the end of the Liturgical Year, we celebrate the Feast of Christ the King. The liturgy makes use of Biblical references to God's kingship and applies them to Christ. For example: 'Your divine throne endures for ever' (Ps44/45:6); 'The Lord reigns; he is robed in majesty' (Ps92/93:1); 'And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him.' (Dan7:13). Before Pilate, our Lord did not deny his kingship, and at his Ascension he claimed his rightful sovereignty: 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me' (Mt28:18).

In contrast, the crowning of Jesus with thorns was done in spiteful contempt; the following lines from Psalm 21/22 could be put on his lips:

I am a worm, and no man;
Scorned by men and despised by the people.
All who see me mock at me,
They make mouths at me, they wag their heads (vv 6-7).

Yet the Fathers, such as St Chromatius and St Cyril of Jerusalem, see in it an unwitting proclamation of the truth:

These things were done to mock Jesus. But now we know they happened through a heavenly mystery. Wickedness was at work among the former; among the latter, the mystery of faith and the light of truth.... Therefore, he is invested in purple as king, in scarlet as prince of martyrs; he is crowned as conqueror, is hailed as Lord and is adored as God. (St Chromatius)¹¹

When they 'clothed him in purple,' it was in mockery, yet ironically it was a fulfilment of prophecy, for he was indeed a king, so even their parody indirectly served divine revelation. Even though they did it in a spirit of derision, still they did it, and his royal dignity was by that symbolically heralded. So, likewise, though it was with thorns they crowned him, it was still a crown. (St Cyril of Jerusalem)¹²

The Shroud of Turin gives testimony not only of the streams of blood on the forehead of Jesus, but also of an incident not recorded in the Gospel. The Shroud as we see it is a mirror image, and if a mirror is held up to the face, the word REX can be seen above the left lip (right as we look at it)—further evidence of the soldiers' vicious sport, but again proclaiming the truth.

Once more we must sorrowfully acknowledge that it was for our sins that the King of the universe suffered this cruel shame. The land was cursed to bring forth thorns and thistles after Adam's Fall (Gen 3:18); in the Gospel, thorns represent the 'cares and riches and pleasures of life' which choke the seed of the word of God, rendering it fruitless. Let us not continue to crown the Sacred Head of Jesus with thorns of our own, but rather accept his sovereignty over our lives. In the words of Dom Prosper Gueranger:

¹¹ St Chromatius, *Tractate on Matthew*, 19.1-3.

¹² St Cyril of Jerusalem, *Sermon on the Paralytic*, 12.

Here the believer prostrates himself before his Saviour and says with a heart full of compassion and veneration: 'Hail King of the Jews! Thou art indeed the Son of David, and therefore our Messiah and our Redeemer! Israel, that hath so lately proclaimed thee King, now denies thee; the Gentiles scoff at thy royalty, making it an opportunity for insult....Do thou meanwhile accept our homage and submission! Reign now and forever over our hearts and over our whole being!'¹³

May he indeed be 'King and centre of all hearts' as we pray in the Litany of the Sacred Heart.

It is particularly the sin of pride which is expiated in this desecration of the Sacred Head of Wisdom Incarnate.

Attend now, O pride of the human heart that shuns humiliation and craves distinction! Who is this man clothed in the trappings of royalty, that he may be loaded with disgrace like a contemptible slave? He is your King and your God. He was held to be 'as it were a leper' and 'the most abject of men' (Is 53:4,3) in order to save you from eternal abjection, and to deliver you from the curse of pride. Woe, therefore, and woe again to those who behold this utter lowliness and yet exalt themselves in their pride; 'they crucify again for themselves the Son of God' (Heb 6:6). (St Bonaventure)¹⁴

Let us beware, also, of re-enacting the mockery of Jesus by insolent treatment of others, especially the most vulnerable, those 'with no form or comeliness' (Is 53:2), for he will say to us on the Day of Judgement, 'as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me' (Mt25:40). St Paul admonishes us, 'Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God... Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another' (Eph 4:30-32). Our Divine Master calls us, rather, to bear insult and injury patiently in union with him: 'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also' (Lk 6:27-29). So let us pray with St John Henry Newman:

Let me bear pain, reproach, disappointment, slander, anxiety, suspense, as Thou wouldest have me, O my Jesu, and as Thou by Thy own suffering hast taught me, when it comes....I wish to bear insult meekly, and to return good for evil. I wish to humble myself in all things, and to be silent when I am ill-used, and to be patient when sorrow or pain is prolonged, and all for the love of Thee, and Thy Cross, knowing that in this way I shall gain the promise both of this life and of the next.¹⁵

4. The Carrying of the Cross (Mt 27:31-32; Mk 15:20-21; Lk 23:26; Jn 19:17).

'Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrow; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted....the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all' (Is 53:4,6).

I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
My heart is like wax,
it is melted within my breast;
my strength is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue cleaves to my jaws;
thou dost lay me in the dust of death (Ps 21 / 22:14-15).

¹³ Dom Prosper Gueranger, *The Liturgical Year, Passiontide and Holy Week*.

¹⁴ St Bonaventure, *The Tree of Life*, 25.

¹⁵ St John Henry Newman, *Meditations and devotions*, The Power of the Cross.

What is told in a few sober words in the Gospel about the carrying of the cross by Jesus is conveyed in graphic detail, for our meditation, by these prophetic writings. And he did it for love of us, as St Cyril of Alexandria proclaims:

They led away the author of life to die—to die for our sake. ... Condemned to death though innocent, he went forward bearing on his shoulders the cross on which he was to suffer. He did this for our sake, taking on himself the punishment that the Law justly imposed on sinners. He was cursed for our sake according to the saying of Scripture: ‘A curse is on everyone who is hanged on a tree (Gal 3:13). ... We who have all committed many sins were under that ancient curse for our refusal to obey the law of God. To set us free he who was without sin took that curse upon himself. Since he is God who is above all, his sufferings sufficed for all, his death in the flesh was the redemption of all. And so Christ carried the cross, a cross that was rightfully not his but ours, who were under the condemnation of the law. ... Our Lord Jesus Christ was not ashamed to carry the cross we deserved, and he did so because he loved us.’¹⁶

Jesus bids us to participate in this redemptive action if we are to be his disciples: ‘If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me’ (Lk 9:23). Bl Columba Marmion enlarges on this:

Our Lord says to us: ‘Accept this share of My sufferings which, in My Divine foreknowledge, on the day of My Passion, I reserved for you.’

How shall we refuse to accept, from Christ’s hands, this sorrow, this trial, this contradiction, this adversity? ... Let us take it, as Christ took His cross, out of love for Him and in union with Him. We shall sometimes feel ready to sink beneath the burden. St Paul confesses that certain hours of his life were so full of weariness and disappointment that he was ‘weary even of life’ (2Cor 1:8). But like the great Apostle, let us look on Him who loved us so much as to deliver Himself up for us; let us unite ourselves to Christ with yet more love at those hours when the body is tortured, or the soul is crushed, or the mind is in darkness, or the deep action of the spirit in His purifying operations is making itself felt. Then the virtue and unction of His Cross will be communicated to us, and we shall find peace in it as well as strength, and that innermost joy which knows how to smile in the midst of suffering: ‘I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation’ (2Cor 7:4).

These are the graces which Our Lord has merited for us. Indeed when He went up Mount Calvary, helped by the Cyrenean, Christ Jesus, the God-Man, thought of all those who, in the course of the centuries, would help Him to carry His Cross in accepting their own; He merited for them, at that moment, inexhaustible graces of strength, resignation, and self-surrender which would cause them to say like Him: ‘Father, not My will, but Thine be done’ (Lk 22:42).¹⁷

There are other ways of carrying the cross, particularly that of courageously bearing witness to Christ, to the Gospel, to the Ten Commandments, to the truth, thereby incurring the hatred, rejection, opprobrium, discrimination and even persecution which our Lord and Master suffered first. ‘If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you’ (Jn 15:18). ‘Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and put you to death; and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake’ (Mt 24:9). St Paul exhorts us: ‘Be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God’ (Eph 5:1-2). To walk in love is to be a peacemaker, to endure suffering rather than inflict it, to forgive rather than take revenge, to overcome evil with good. This is to carry the cross of Christ, the cross of reconciliation, the cross of peace.

In addition to the sorrow and suffering involved in Jesus’ carrying of the cross, the Fathers of the Church see in it a majestic element, as Pope St Leo declares:

¹⁶ St Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 12.

¹⁷ Bl Columba Marmion, *Christ in his Mysteries*, Chapter XIII, Passiontide.

To the wicked, the sight of the Lord carrying his own cross was indeed an object of derision. But to the faithful a great mystery was revealed, for the cross was destined to become the sceptre of his power. Here was the majestic spectacle of a glorious conqueror mightily overthrowing the hostile forces of the devil and nobly bearing the trophy of his victory.¹⁸

We will all have a share in that victorious triumph if we bear the cross, following in the footsteps of Simon of Cyrene. St Chromatius writes:

The cross of Christ is the triumph of virtue and a trophy of victory. How blessed is Simon, who deserved to be the first to bear so great a sign of victory....He was a partaker of the Passion of Christ so that he might be a partaker of his resurrection, as the apostle teaches: 'If we die with him, we will also live with him. If we endure with him, we will also reign with him'(2 Tim 2:11-12).¹⁹

5.The Crucifixion (Mt27:33-54; Mk15:22-39; Lk23:33-49; Jn19:17-37)

Reflections on the last words of Jesus from the cross:

I *'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do'* (Lk23:34).

He poured out his soul to death,
And was numbered with the transgressors;
Yet he bore the sins of many,
And made intercession for the transgressors (Is 53:12).

Our Lord practised what he preached: he forgave his enemies and prayed for those who were crucifying him. St Augustine comments:

When he was praying as he hung on the cross, he could see and foresee. He could see all his enemies. He could foresee that many of them would become his friends. That is why he was interceding for them all. They were raging, but he was praying. They were saying to Pilate, 'Crucify,' but he was crying out, 'Father, forgive.' He was hanging from the cruel nails, but he did not lose his gentleness. He was asking for pardon for those from whom he was receiving such atrocious treatment.²⁰

He did not pray in vain, for on the day of Pentecost, three thousand believed, repented and were baptised. 'Father, forgive' not only those who have injured us, but also today's enemies of Christ and the Gospel, that they too may be converted, for many 'know not what they do.'

II *'Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise'*(Lk23:43).

In the words of St John Chrysostom:

The thief believed in Christ as he hung on the cross; he acknowledged him as God, and because of a solitary word he obtained entrance into Paradise. This thief alone recognised the Son of God as the Saviour, not when he was on a royal throne, nor in the glory of the temple, nor speaking from heaven above, nor disposing events through the ministry of angels; instead, he acknowledged him as he hung on the cross between thieves.

¹⁸ Pope St Leo the Great, *Sermon* 8.4.

¹⁹ St Chromatius, *Tractate on Matthew*, 19.5.

²⁰ St Augustine, *Sermon* 382.2.

The thief saw Jesus as the object of insults and adored him in his glory. He saw him whom Judas had sold condemned as a criminal and acknowledged him to be King. He begged for healing saying, 'Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.'²¹

No one, therefore, should despair of the mercy of God.

III *'Woman, behold your son!'* Then he said to his disciple, *'Behold your mother!'* (Jn19:26-27)

As part of his last will and testament, Jesus entrusted his Mother to the care of St John, and extended Mary's motherhood to every Christian, to all the redeemed, to all for whom he died.

Our Lady of Guadalupe confirmed her universal maternal solicitude in her words to St Juan Diego in 1531:

I am your merciful Mother, the Mother of all who live united in this land, and of all mankind, of all those who love me, of those who cry to me, of those who have confidence in me. Here I will hear their weeping and their sorrows, and will remedy and alleviate their sufferings, necessities and misfortunes.²²

IV *'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'* (Mt27:46; Mk15:34; Ps21/22:1)

Pope Benedict XVI explains this beautifully:

It is no ordinary cry of abandonment. Jesus is praying the great psalm of suffering Israel, and so he is taking upon himself all the tribulation, not just of Israel, but of all those in this world who suffer from God's concealment. He brings the world's anguished cry at God's absence before the heart of God himself. He identifies himself with suffering Israel, with all who suffer under 'God's darkness'; he takes their cry, their anguish, all their helplessness upon himself – and in so doing he transforms it....The whole Passion is, as it were, anticipated in the psalm. Yet when Jesus utters the opening words of the psalm, the whole of this great prayer is essentially present – including the certainty of an answer to prayer, to be revealed in the Resurrection, in the gathering of the 'great assembly', and in the poor having their fill (cf. vv.24-26). The cry of extreme anguish is at the same time the certainty of an answer from God, the certainty of salvation – not only for Jesus himself, but for 'many'²³.

V *'I thirst'* (Jn19:28; Ps68/69:21)

He who brought forth water for the Israelites from the rock (cf. Ex17:6; Num20:11; 1Cor10:4), thirsts. He who promised that his blood would be real drink (Jn6:55), thirsts. He who proclaimed, 'If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink' (Jn7:37), thirsts. Jesus thirsts, a natural, excruciating thirst from loss of blood and extreme dehydration, yet he thirsts far more deeply with infinite, divine, spiritual longing. He thirsts to drink to the dregs the cup the Father has given him. He thirsts for the conversion of those who are putting him to death, for the faith of unbelievers, for the salvation of souls. He thirsts for love, for a response to his own love to the end; he thirsts for us, for our heart and will, for our whole self. Let us not respond with sour vinegar.

VI *'It is finished'* (Jn19:30)

²¹ St John Chrysostom, *Sermon Mai*, 33,2.3.

²² Cf. Francis Johnston, *The Wonder of Guadalupe*, pp.26-27.

²³ Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth, Part Two, Holy Week*, p.214.

This could also be translated: 'It is accomplished.' Throughout his earthly life, Jesus was intent on accomplishing the will of his Father. 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work' (Jn4:34). At the beginning of his 'hour,' in the high-priestly prayer after the Last Supper, he said to His Father, 'I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou gavest to me' (Jn17:4).

Now all is indeed accomplished. Our Lord has obeyed his Father to the last drop of his blood and truly loved his own 'to the end' (Jn13:1). He has fulfilled the Scriptures, completed his sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins, consummated his priesthood on the cross – the altar of the New Covenant – given his flesh and blood as food and drink, and his Mother to be the Mother of the Church. Now he can return to the Father.

VII *'Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.'* (Lk23:46)

'And having said this, he breathed his last.' Jesus died of his own free will at the moment he chose, for he had said earlier that no one took his life from him; he had power to lay it down and power to take it again (cf. Jn10:18). His last prayer here in St Luke's account is taken from Psalm 30/31 which, in the midst of affliction, proclaims confidence in the faithfulness and saving power of God. Our Lord, however, changes the appellation from 'Lord' to 'Father (Abba)', thus intensifying the tone of intimacy and trust. All the horrors which hell's fury had inflicted on him in his Passion, all the sufferings which his Father had asked him to bear, had not diminished the Son's love and confidence. His death, in conformity with his whole life, was an entrustment of his whole being into the hands of God. Let us pray for the grace to do likewise.