

## Friday in Passion Week: The Compassion of the Blessed Virgin

### *Summary of the Morrow's Meditation*

We will meditate tomorrow: first, on the sufferings which Mary experienced at the foot of the cross; second, on the virtues which she practised there; third, on the words addressed to her by Jesus. We will then make the resolution: first, often to honour the compassion of the Blessed Virgin by pious aspirations; second, to imitate today, by some special act, the patience, the humility, and the spirit of sacrifice of which she offers us an example in this mastery; third, to offer great thanks to Our Lord for having given us Mary to be our mother. Our spiritual nosegay shall be the words of the Church: "*Mary, abyss of love, make me feel thy sorrows; make me to weep with thee.*"

### *Meditation for the Morning*

Let us transport ourselves in spirit to the holy mountain of Calvary, to the foot of the cross, be side Mary. Let us salute this mother of dolours as the queen of martyrs, for she will not allow herself to be called by any other name in this mystery. "*Call me not Noemi (that is, beautiful), but call me Mara (that is, bitter), for the Almighty hath quite filed me with bitterness*" (Ruth 1:20).

### THE SUFFERINGS WHICH MARY ENDURED AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

All the most cruel torments which the martyrs endured are as nothing in comparison with the anguish which Mary suffered. The martyrs suffered at least only in their bodies, and besides the unction of grace softened and charmed their torments to such a degree that they were seen to triumph joyfully amidst the most cruel tortures; but in Mary it was her very soul which was transpierced with the sword of grief, without the alleviation of any consolation (Luke 11:35). And what suffering, O my God! If a mother who sees her son expiring before her eyes suffers indescribable agony, what must Mary have felt, she who felt for Jesus a love which nature and grace elevated to the highest degree; nature in showing her in Jesus the most amiable of sons, the most holy, the most perfect, the most accomplished of men; grace in revealing to her in Him a God infinitely good and infinitely amiable (Hymn, *Stabat Mater*); and this beloved Son she was forced to see dragged through the streets of Jerusalem, to the priests, to Pilate, to Herod, everywhere insulted, scoffed at, despised; she was forced to behold Him scourged, crowned with thorns, proclaimed by the people to be worthy of death, and worse than the thief and assassin Barabbas; she was forced to accompany Him to Calvary, ascending the mountain beneath the weight of the cross, exhausted from loss of strength and of blood, covered with wounds and spittle; and she could not give Him any aid! For a mother like Mary, what a martyrdom! She was forced to see Him stretched upon the cross, to hear the blows of the hammers driving the nails into His feet and His hands, to contemplate Him, with all His wounds, lifted up between heaven and earth, agonising during three hours; she was forced to hear His last farewell, receive His last sigh, without being able to die with Him (Ibid.). And, what was worse still, she suffered the sorrows which she herself caused her Son by her extreme affliction; and all those other quite inexpressible tortures which the heart of her Son suffered at the sight of all the sins committed by the men who are determined to damn themselves in spite of

all the means of salvation offered to them. O daughter of Jerusalem! to what can we compare the extremity of thy affliction? It is as great as the sea (Lam. 11:14). Obtain for me grace to compassionate thy sorrows, O my mother! (Hymn, *Stabat Mater*) It is my duty: first, because a son ought to share in the sufferings of his mother (Ibid.); second, because he could not love Jesus who could be insensible to His sufferings (Ibid.); third, because my sins are at once both the cause and the object of the sufferings of thy Son, and of thine, O afflicted mother! (Ibid.)

#### THE VIRTUES PRACTISED BY MARY AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

First, she practises there an unalterable patience. She stands up in the midst of the horrible tempest like a rock surrounded by waves, which beat against it without causing it to fall. Neither the abyss into which she is plunged by her grief, nor the spectacle of death, nor the fury of man, nor the rage of demons is able to cast her down. Her demeanour is full of resolution and courage. Without allowing a complaint to escape her, she adores the designs of God in silence and submits to them. Let us look at ourselves in this beautiful mirror of patience, and let us be confounded. It requires so little to cast us down, to make us lose heart, to excite complaints and murmurings! Second, the humility of Mary is here equal to her patience. A mother whose son is suffering capital punishment is ashamed to show herself; she is afraid lest the ignominy of her son should rebound upon her, and she hides herself; but Mary shows herself and shows herself even at the foot of the cross (John 19:25). It is there she awaits all the contempt, all the insults that can be heaped upon her, and is happy to be able to taste with Jesus the chalice of humiliation and to drink it down to the dregs. What a lesson for us! Third, Mary teaches us the spirit of sacrifice. Knowing that the design of God is that Jesus should die to save the world, she enters with her whole soul into the divine decrees. Heavenly Father, she says, take Thy sword, strike the Victim, tear my entrails, wrench out my heart by taking from me my beloved Son. I resign myself to it for the sake of Thy glory and the salvation of the world. What a sublime example of the spirit of sacrifice!

#### THE WORDS SPOKEN BY JESUS TO MARY

Whilst Mary was suffering such great sorrows, and practising such lofty virtues, Jesus, turning His eyes towards St John, and seeing in him, state the Fathers, the representative of all the faithful, **Woman**, He says to Mary, **behold thy son; I substitute him to fill My place** (John 19:26). Blessed words, by which Jesus gives us His mother to be our mother, He who had already given us His Father to be our Father, that we might be His brethren, having the same Father and mother! Words which ought to fill our hearts with confidence, with consolation, and with happiness! O Mary, thou art my mother! I no longer fear, I am happy and I hope!

*Resolutions and spiritual nosegay as above.*