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ALL CHARGES ON LOWEST SCALE.

Thine only begotten Son And yet, dearly beloved brethren and children in Christ, oh! appalling thought! one to which we would never dare give utterance had we not the authority of the prince of theologians, the angelic Doctor St Thomas, who ventures to assert that the very sufferings of our dearest Lord are surpassed by those of the poor souls in Purgatory! Well, then, may we represent these afflicted souls crying to us from their fiery prisons: "O all ye that pass by this way, attend and see if there be sorrow like my sorrow, for He hath made a vintage of me: as the Lord spoke in the day of His fierce wrath" (Lam. 1-12)

Though the bare thought of the pain of sense be of itself more than enough to make us cry out with the Apostle "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb 10 31), there is yet one other torture endured by these holy souls which we have not yet considered, though far greater than all the rest. It is that of the terrible "pain of loss." Though assured of the beatific vision the souls in purgatory suffer the privation of God, which, according to the Council of Florence, is the most dreadful of all imaginable torments. The beauty of God's majesty is unchanged. It remains the same supremely desirable object it ever was, but the soul is changed. As Father Faber beautifully puts it, all that in life and in this world of sense dulled its longings after God, is gone from it, so that it seeks Him with an impetuosity which no imagination can conceive. When summoned before the tribunal of their heavenly Judge ere they were assigned to the cleansing flames of purgatory, one momentary vision of the Godhead was granted them, momentary, yet so engraven on their souls, that not even centuries of earth's slow time, centuries during which many are doomed to suffer, can ever efface it from their memory. But this very remembrance serves only to increase their torments. Though willingly submissive to God's judgment in their regard, they long, nevertheless, to be united to Him Who is their last end. They sigh for the happy day, when, through our prayers and good works, it shall be given them to burst asunder their fiery fetters, and wing their flight to the land of rest where they shall see and enjoy Him without whom all else is nought. No tongue can express, no mind adequately conceive the agony of the disembodied soul whilst striving to obtain the sight of God, its true and only centre. In their holy impatience they continually breathe forth eager aspirations of love and sorrow. "Out of the depths I have cried to Thee O Lord! Lord hear my voice. Let Thy ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication!" (Ps. 129). "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" "My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord" (Ps. 83). "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me! O God, my God, for Thee my soul hath thirsted. For Thee I sigh and mourn in this fiery vale where there is no way and no water; as the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, my God. My soul hath thirsted for the strong living God, when shall I come and appear before the face of God!" (Ps. 41) Such is the piercing cry which, wrung from these poor souls, ascends as a wail of lamentation to the throne of the Most High. Could any appeal be more piteously eloquent? And what is the answer to this burning appeal? Alas! alas! the only answer they receive is that the time of mercy is past, that the night has come wherein no man can work; that they must wait and suffer till the Divine Justice be satisfied to the last farthing. Well may we apply to them these words of the inspired writer, "To what shall I compare thee? To what 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 a sea is thy destruction: who shall heal thee?" (Lam. 2. 13)

From this fearful, though but feeble picture of the torments of purgatory, let us consider who are they that are tormented therein. They are the friends of God. Whilst on earth they fought beneath the standard of the Cross and triumphed victoriously over the devil, the world, and the flesh. Champions in the Christian warfare, they have left us in the continual martyrdom of their lives the noblest examples of love and devotedness. Bearing about them the burden of our frail nature, they have been cut off before they had time to pay the debt due to some slight fall. They are souls every one of

whom has been redeemed by the blood of a God Man. Sons and co-heirs of Christ Jesus, their are destined to attain their royal inheritance yet so as by fire. Unlike the reprobate, who from the depths of hell hurl forth the most horrid blasphemies against the Divine Justice, these poor souls, despite their intense sufferings, continue to bless and praise the hand that so grievously afflicts them. Though momentarily separated from their heavenly Spouse, they are of the happy number of the elect, and bear the badge of their dignity upon their nuptial robe with which, as with a refulgent light, they are clothed. Ought not their grandeur and dignity claim for them our compassion as well as our love and veneration? Fellow-members in Christ Jesus, and, therefore, allied to us by the closest bonds of friendship and charity, they are our spiritual brethren, everyone of whom we are bound to love as ourselves. Yea, more, besides the bonds of religion, many have claims upon us arising from the natural ties of flesh and blood. Who is there, however young he may be, who has not had already to deplore the loss of a beloved father, of a self-sacrificing mother, of a fondly devoted sister or brother, of a faithful spouse or friend? Are we not moved at the dread uncertainty of their fate? True, we cannot draw aside the mysterious veil which shrouds from our view the decrees of the Almighty, yet may we not safely presume that many, heretofore the nearest and dearest to us on earth, are now pining amid the flames of Purgatory, where they are doomed to suffer twenty, thirty, one hundred—nay, hundreds of years, even, as was revealed to a great servant of God, until the day of judgment, unless we hasten to their relief? Which of you could bear the sight of a fond parent, of an affectionate brother or sister, of a darling child exposed to devouring flames, and be so hard-hearted as not to rush to their rescue, though at the risk of your own lives? And yet you remain cruelly insensible to the sufferings of those dear souls who are ever burning without being consumed! You know how inflexible is the justice of God in chastising even His most privileged servants. You know, too, the fearful state of dereliction His horror of sin reduced His only begotten Son to. If such be the excess of His wrath in the day of His mercy and love, Oh! what must now be the severity of His infinite justice when no longer softened by the voice of love and compassion? Ought not this thought rouse our sympathy in behalf of these poor souls, especially when we know that, as prisoners and debtors of God's justice, they are unable to help themselves, though they probably can and do intercede for and help us? Let us borrow the soul-stirring thought of a writer who, though not a member of Holy Church, may be followed when he bids us recall to mind our deep-felt emotions when summoned to the death-bed of those we fondly cherished, there to receive the last testimony of expiring love. When we felt the thrilling—Oh, how thrilling!—pressure of that wasted hand so often clasped in ours, when we beheld the livid eyes of a dying parent struggling in the midst of stifled grief, to bend upon us from the very threshold of the grave, one more, one last assurance of tender love and devotedness. When, at length, the vital spark had fled, and we saw ourselves alone beside the lifeless corpse, Oh! if our stricken conscience then smote us with the remembrance of any unkind word or deed, with having caused one single pang to that silent heart, one only furrow to that lifeless cheek, would we not have given all the world over were we able to recall to life that beloved one whose eyes were now closed upon us for ever? As we bade a last farewell to the cold remains stretched lifeless before us ere they were consigned to their final resting-place, did we not, at every ring of the fatal knell, feel our very heart breaking within us? In an outburst of grief, did we not even wish that they who were about to commit the lifeless body to the tomb would perform the same sad office for ourselves? Fruitless desires, vain sighs and tears! It cannot be. We must part. The object of our love is gone, never, never to return. What are we saying? They are gone! It is true. But all is not gone with them. No, no. The Church of Christ bids us hope on even against hope O holy Church! Thrice holy Church! we salute thee and bless God who has given thee to be our tender mother. Unlike thy ungrateful children, who, having strayed from thy maternal fold, follow not their dead beyond the grave; unlike those who coldly preach that