

crucified Him? No man ever spoke as He did. We know how He went about doing good—curing the blind and the lame, comforting mourners, bringing peace and repentance to sinners, raising the dead to life. Thousands hung spell-bound on His words of wisdom. No man was like Him—none so gentle, so pure, so noble: to see Him was to love Him. What has He done that they should treat Him like the thieves? The answer would be that He had done no wrong; that justice could find no cause in Him, and the judge who condemned Him had declared Him innocent. There might be found some who could say that it was because He taught as no man had taught before, and because He was pure and good and noble, He now hung there a victim of the jealous hypocrites for whom alone He had a harsh word on His lips. But the man was not yet to be found who would say that He died on the Cross in order to give testimony to the Truth with His Blood, in order to prove that He was the Son of God, and in order to make atonement for the sins of mankind—even for the sins of them for whom He prayed before dying.

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We all know we must die, but not one of us knows at what hour or where. The Death of Christ was foretold and prepared through long centuries with an exactness that makes the prophecies concerning it read like a page of a Gospel written by an eye-witness after the event. No unbeliever can pretend that the Prophecies were not written long before He came on earth, and none can deny that they are in marvellous accord with what actually happened during the days of His Passion. He was the Promised One whom the Jews awaited. For forty centuries the sacred oracles had prepared them for His coming. His Birth, His Life, and His Death were a wonderful fulfilment of what had been foretold: and yet, so strange is the human heart that His chosen people allowed Him to be delivered into the hands of His enemies, and they themselves actually mobbed Him and ill-treated Him when, bruised and bleeding under the heavy Cross, He tottered through the streets towards Calvary. His nearest friends deserted Him: His chosen apostle denied Him: He was left to die between thieves: and tradition tells us that His Mother Mary, and a poor sinner whom He had won to Himself, were the first to find Him in His loneliness when the end came. Afterwards, the cowardly disciples had their eyes opened and they came back, ashamed and repentant. And in all this, too, was fulfilled the word of the Holy Ghost, known before He came among men. In the Psalms, in the Prophets, it was all foretold. And as it was written so it came to pass: The Kings of the earth rose up against Him: they repaid Him evil for good; He became the Man of Sorrow and was broken for our sins; false witnesses arose against Him: He opened not His mouth: He was led to death as a lamb silent under the hand of the shearer: He turned His cheek to them that struck Him, and was saturated with insults; Israel sold the Just One for a price of gold; He gave His life, and was placed between malefactors; they digged His hands and feet, and they numbered all His bones; they cast lots for His tunic, and they gave Him vinegar and gall to drink: He prayed for his executioners; for our sins He was covered with wounds; and at His Death, the earth trembled and the mountains shook because of the anger of God with His enemies. With detail all this was foretold of old; and it all came to pass exactly on that first Good Friday when Jesus died for us. Neither chance nor human ingenuity could have prepared so wonderful a harmony between prophecy and fulfilment. It was the work of God, Whose Only Begotten Son was to make satisfaction for our sins. And during all His life, as a boy in Nazareth, as a man working at the trade of the carpenter, as a teacher during the Public Life, and especially as the end drew near, it was all before Him, and not one iota of what He was to suffer was concealed from Him. How

vividly He saw it when the Agony was on Him, driving a sweat of blood through His pores and wringing from His humanity that cry of anguish:

Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass away from Me!

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His death was the only reward His love met with: His own deserted Him, and this surely was not the least He had to suffer. In spite of His miracles, in spite of His triumphs, in spite of the fulfilment of the Prophecies, men closed their eyes to the Truth and hardened their hearts, and He died amid the hatred and the insults of mankind that He died to save. Alas, the scenes of Calvary are repeated to-day. He is denied and insulted by those for whom He died; even His own deny Him and fall away from Him; and the world at large obstinately closes its eyes against the light of His Divinity and hardens its heart against His saving grace. He has become an object of hatred and derision again; His disciples are persecuted for His Name's sake; the ranks of the Jews of old have been recruited by the secularists and the materialists and the plutocrats and the sensualists and the Freemasons of our day. He could touch the heart of Magdalene, and win the love of the thief by His side, but the world to-day is full of hard hearts that have cut themselves off from His influence, for whom there is small hope here or hereafter. Save in Him, there is no hope for them or for us; and still, in spite of all the insults and coldness, His dying voice comes down across the ages to us all:

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!

NOTES

Holy Week: The Feast of Love

God manifested His love for man by creating him, like unto Himself, and only a little less than the angels. A further proof of Divine Love was the infusion of sanctifying grace into the human soul, effecting a wonderful spiritual union between creature and Creator, and making the soul a thing of beauty far surpassing even the work of creation which covered the earth with waving woods above broad rivers, and elevated the high mountains that teach men to look up to Heaven, and hung the sun and the stars in the skies to reveal the glory of Him Whose handiwork they are. A still further proof was given when God sent His Only Son to redeem sinners by dying on the Cross. Christ became man, taking our nature upon Him and becoming our brother, pouring Himself out and humbling Himself in order to be one with us in our humanity. One more intimate union remained possible. It was achieved in the institution of the Blessed Eucharist in which the Son of God gave Himself to us as the food of our souls, to nourish us and to preserve us to life everlasting. "What more could I have done for My vineyard that I have not done?"

The First Ordination

When He said to His apostles, "Do this for a commemoration of Me," He instituted the Christian priesthood, and gave to them and to their successors the power of consecrating and changing bread and wine into His Body and Blood. On His word and in His name, until the end of time, the priest at the altar, all over the world, would henceforth say, "This is My Body," and "This is My Blood"; and by Christ's command that Body that was broken and that Blood that was shed would be given to the faithful for the life of the world, thus consummating the last close union, thus incorporating us all with Him, and through Him with one another; making us children of God, not only by faith and by redemption, but even by brotherhood with Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of the Father. How well was the Blessed Eucharist named by the Christians of old the Sacrament of Love.