

Our Lady's Little Library Series

SATURDAY

Little Handbook of Our Lady

By: Mother Mary Potter

Permissu Superiorum

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Preface

Devotion to Our Lady is not content with pious practices and little prayers, but consecrates the whole heart and all the affections of her Clients to the object of their love, forming their thoughts after the Spirit of Mary and moulding their actions in imitation of her transcendent virtues.

The "Little Handbook" puts this well: the thoughts suggested are admirably suited to bring this sweet devotion more and more into the practical daily life of the children of Mary and help them to live their lives truly in Her Company. May God's Blessing follow the little book.

Yours devotedly,

J. A. Campbell

Rome – August 15th, 1899

Review "The New World" - Chicago

The Little Company of Mary has conferred a lasting favor by sending forth this dainty booklet in its suggestive deeply tinted blue cover and gold lettered: "Saturday. Little Handbook of Our Lady." Forty years ago it was not rare to come upon Catholics somewhat advanced in years who abstained from flesh meat on Saturdays to honor the Mother of God. This handbook is a charming plea with the loving children of Mary to resume the olden time observance of Saturday, not by abstinence from flesh meat but by consecrating the thoughts of that day especially to her. "To offer our thoughts to Mary is to presuppose that we must do ourselves some violence, put ourselves to some trouble that they may be in a manner worthy of her. This demands sacrifice and earnestness. We come across good people, and that not rarely, who are willing to make offerings of exterior acts and yet to whom it would be a far greater sacrifice to guard their thoughts" (pages 18-19). Our Saturday corresponds with the ancient Sabbath, wherein God rested from His works, "the author reminds us, and then asks, "May not Mary reverently be styled the Sabbath of God, as she is so eminently the place of his rest?" Beautiful thoughts and gracefully developed in this prose poem! And one is not left to guess out his way in directing his consecration Saturday thoughts. It is suggested to begin with Mary's heart on the first Holy Saturday. For one instant we are surprised that her joy is proposed for imitation; but it is only for an instant. "That fearful Friday is over. It can never come again. It is finished. Jesus is dead. He will never die again. Death no more will have dominion over Him. Sweet Mother, we, too, are glad: we, too, rejoice with thee! We, too, are glad in thy happiness, thy joy in the happiness of Jesus! Thy children will be like to thee, and will rejoice with thee, commencing to do now on earth what the blessed do in Heaven—to rejoice in the joy of their God—whilst they are yet upon the earth. Yes, the sentiments of Our Lady's Heart on that first Holy Saturday should be the type of our lives, because Jesus is in joy. He will suffer no more. "Into the region of holy hope, the appropriate sphere for those who await the resurrection, this tribute of the Little Company of Mary lifts the hearts of the faithful.

Chapter I

Saturday! The Sabbath of Creation! This is the day, which God has given for His Mother's honor, on earth!

Loving children of Mary, it is God's will that you respond to this loving desire of His Heart, that His Mother should be more honored, and especially honored on Saturday, and we will give here a few of the many reasons which have moved the Bride of Christ, guided by the Infallible Spirit of Truth, to choose Saturday as a day to set apart, as it were, in which to pay more special honor and devotion to Mary.

Our Saturday corresponds with the ancient Sabbath, wherein God rested from His works, “And on the seventh day God ended His work, which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all the work which He had done. Genesis 11:2.

May not Mary reverently be styled the Sabbath of God, as she is so eminently the place of His rest?

Over and over again the Holy Scriptures, under various figures represents Mary as the chosen place of God's rest.

“He who made thee rested in thy tabernacle:” or again: “This is my rest forever and ever; here will I dwell, for I have chosen it.” Psalm cxxxi:14.

We find Jesus himself teaching His favored spouse, St. Gertrude, a prayer to make when unable to repose. She was instructed to pray to Him thus: “By Thy unruffled repose in the bosom of the Eternal Father—By Thy most peaceful rest in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary,” etc.

Rest! What a word in these days of preternatural activity of mind and body. Science is stretched to its farthest limits in the discovery of some counteracting influence to combat the disorder and disease engendered in the human body by overwork. Scientific men prescribe what they call the “rest cure” for the reestablishing of the overtaxed system. Dearly beloved ones of God! we all need some counteracting influence lest our souls too become a prey to the general rush—the wear and tear of life. Let us then try this same remedy, rest. And let it be used with the intent of glorifying God, of honoring His Blessed Mother, who is our Mother also.

It is the consideration of the affinity existing between the ancient Sabbaths and the most pure soul of Mary, which moves us to put before you as forcibly as we can the excellence of that holy practice dear to the Church of devoting the Saturday especially to our Lord’s honor, and to venture an advice which may indeed be unpalatable to many. Strive on Saturday to do less active work than usual, and give to our Blesses Lady more place in your thoughts. Try to rest a little. We venture to say that you will lose nothing and gain very much by foregoing something ever of your bodily activity. Yet if you cannot without neglecting some duty rest exteriorly, rest interiorly. Make a retreat within your own heart, and there withdraw to contemplate the Immaculate Conception. Look upon her quietly. You cannot do so without loving her. God’s beauty is so reflected in this stainless mirror, this masterpiece of creative love.

Yes, we are assuredly drawn to God, as we rest with the Incarnate Word—in the bosom of Mary, and she will most certainly draw us if we gaze quietly upon her dazzling beauty. Yes they are very near to God who are nurtured in the bosom of Mary, who draw their inspiration from her maternal heart. When our souls are drawn close to the magnificent soul of Mary, then do we bend our bodies low in silent adoration before the Eternal Word, and taste and see how sweet Jesus is to those who love Him through His ever Blessed Mother. There is no more secure—nay, there is no other way of growing rapidly in the knowledge and the love of God than this one of committing ourselves quietly to the guidance of Mary. We have never doubted this, anyone of us, for we have read it often in the lives of the Saints—nay, we have ourselves had some experience of its truth in moments of devotion which have been for us, alas! too rare.

But now it shall no longer be so. Our practice shall be worthy of our belief, and we shall experience within ourselves not passingly, but permanently, the profit which accrues to those happy souls who quietly and reverently enter that sanctuary of God to know Him better in the most marvelous of all His works—Mary! Then shall we know indeed how great has been His love for the children of men. They shall we understand in one degree, that word “My delights are to be with the children of men.”

No one of all God’s creatures knew Jesus or could know Him, as Mary does; but those who know His best are those who keep nearest to Mary, who wait at her gates, who are instructed by that dear mistress, who kept all these words, pondering them in her heart. Mary pondered in her most pure heart all that concerned Jesus and we know that this pondering was a most acceptable act of worship to God.

Let us now seize upon this sure means of advancing in holiness. Let us begin to make good use of the thoughts we have so often wasted and which are so precious to God. It is the thought, the intent which inspires and accompanies our actions which determines their value. The good use of our memory, our understanding and our will is the greatest of all offerings we have to make to our God. We know this, we learned it as children, we learned that we were created “to know, love and serve God.” We must use our memory and our understanding in order to know God, and who can aid us in attaining to this knowledge so certainly as she whom Holy Church salutes – SEDES SAPIENTIAE, Seat of Wisdom.

With this object in view then let us resolve to put into earnest practice this one method of dedicating the Saturday to the honor of the Mother of God, i.e. by keeping a loving watch over all our thoughts; let the exterior acts with which the day must be filled be inundated with thoughts of love, and rather lessen than multiply exterior acts that the interior may be more free to apply itself earnestly to this devotion of pondering in our hearts with Mary, and in honor of Mary, the things of God, quietly, earnestly, lovingly, let this be done, and if there are any exterior acts which can be omitted without our failing in duty we will omit them, that, unhampered as far as may be worldly distractions, we may spend some little time now and then in that spiritual world in

which we indeed live though it is invisible to us.

Given these premises we will proceed to see how we may most fittingly spend our Saturdays in honor of Our Blessed Lady by some consideration on the Saturday as Our Lady's Day.

Chapter II.

SATURDAY ~ Our Lady's Day

“Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day.” Mary, whom we have reverently ventured to call God's Sabbath, ever remembered this injunction of the Holy Spirit.

Holiness was her atmosphere, sanctity her possession. Neither worldliness nor self ever entered that fair sanctuary, her most pure soul. Mary seems indeed to have had no self, no spirit apart from the Spirit of God, so entirely was she possessed by Him. She has her own sweet personality, yet we see in her a most perfect work of the Holy Spirit—we look upon her ever as His spouse. So complete is her union with Him, so entirely does He possess her, that, looking upon her, we see Him rather than her.

May God be ever praised and blessed, who has chosen one from the fallen race of Adam, one pure, unfallen creature, to give Him such entire satisfaction, such complete content. God's rest—Mary? God's Sabbath, we, too, rest in thee; we, too, amid the bustle and hurry of this world, will seek rest in thee. We will fly to thy sanctuary in time of trial; our enemies cannot pursue us there. They may not enter if thou dost forbid them; and thou, sweet mother, dost tenderly enfold in thy arms the weary child of earth who flies to thee for refuge, and in that dear asylum the “wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.” Yes, here our souls find rest, spirit finds rest, and obtains through thee strength to renew its combat with the rebellious flesh. Yes, Mary, thou art to us rest, repose, even while the battle rages most fiercely, when labor overpowers us.

For love of thee, Mother, we will offer our Saturday's to honor thee in our hearts, to offer their emanations to thee, to lead them gently back to thee. Thou wilt direct our thoughts and keep them from selfish and

worldly views. This we resolve to do, for that one day at least, for love of thee.

Now, when we find we are forgetting our little compact, what are we to do? Ah, we will, in spirit, offer the Divine Infant to thee. We will offer to thee His Heart, thank Him for all He has done in thee; and if we grow weary of our watchfulness we will not be discouraged, but whisper to our guardian angel, “What I begin for Mary help me to continue. I have offered to her the love of my heart, resolving to show it in my thoughts on this, her day; I must not be slothful.” Our angel will show how pleasing are our thoughts, how they become, when thus offered, real substantial acts. That an act of love, a holy thought, a fervent desire, the suppression of some worldly thoughts, all these are virtues, the fruit of Christ’s passion, and we shall only know in the next world how acceptable that one day was to God.

Yes, the, loved one of God who shall have faithfully observed this practice, on one of those days of Mary that sweet Mother may come herself to take your last thoughts, and in that day of your consummation you will find contentment in God, and your whole being be as one grand thought—an immortal intelligence—the knowledge that you love and are beloved. You are ranked with the saints. Yea, forever and ever angels and saints; nay, God Himself will call you “Blessed.”

Chapter III.

How do you spend Saturday? What do you offer especially to Our Blessed Lady on that day specially consecrated to her! Ah, offer what will please her, what will best prove your love for her, will draw you closer and closer to her. You wonder what this offer can be, and you may wonder yet more when I tell you. Offer to her loving thoughts. When we desire to do something more than we are doing for the glory of God, or to honor His saints, we are generally advised to do this or that act with that special intent, and so it seemed good to me to make this suggestion of offering loving, holy thoughts. Thoughts are less attended to than might be supposed. We are sometimes warned by spiritual writes against letting our religion consist of good desires, intentions, etc., merely. Let it not be thought that we are advocating a devotion to consist of mere sentiment; but we do, and that not rarely, come across good people who are willing to make offerings of exterior acts, and yet to whom it would be a far greater sacrifice to guard

their thoughts, to whom it would be a far greater sacrifice to guard their thoughts, to whom it would be a greater act to offer a day's thoughts, for instance, to our Blessed Lord, than to do a day's exterior penance or real hard labor. There are people who would rather walk a dozen miles than spend one hour in mental prayer. Let me not be misunderstood. I have no idea in saying this of encouraging people who spend, or rather waste time in idle thoughts. We are urging that a greater value should be set upon our thoughts. To offer our thoughts to Mary is to presuppose that we must do ourselves some violence, put ourselves to some trouble, that they may be in a manner worthy of her. This demands sacrifice and earnestness; yet, after a time, after many Saturdays, perhaps, consecrated to this holy watchfulness, we shall find our task less difficult, and the more fervent of Mary's children will begin to spend every day as they have learned to spend the Saturday—days of loving thought upon God, upon what is good, upon our Lady's glorious prerogatives. Drawing closer and closer to her, you may learn from her loving heart to think as she thought. God grant that it may be so, for then indeed will His Holy Spirit be with you in a special manner, revealing the secrets of Mary's soul, and your own will grow in its degree like unto it, and delight God, for it is such souls He seeks. Resolve, you who now read, that yours shall be such a soul. Take these simple words as brought to you by your guardian angel, and listen, as Mary listened, to the angel's message. Answer in her own words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to thy word." Then arise, fully resolved that your Saturdays shall be days full of interior acts. It so often happens that when people mean to do something for God, they rise up to perform some exterior acts very good for those who perform them, at that time. When the fervor of the moment is passed, the acts also are omitted; whereas, if the time of fervor had been used to lay in a stock of solid virtue, there would have been a good beginning, promising a life of holy acts—exterior good works—increasing, rather than decreasing with time, but this letter is certain with such works as are not founded in solid, tried virtue.

But you are now resolve to do as your good angel bids you. You will keep that bright spirit busily employed laying before the throne of God a whole host of holy acts, since your holy thoughts will produce real substantial acts in God's sight, though they may not appear such to yourself. Ah, if we but knew the value of one such interior act with God! You have resolved, yet you scarcely know how to commence unless you could make a day's retreat, and this you cannot well do, for you have your ordinary duties to attend to. What is to be done?

Shall I lend you a helping hand for the first Saturday, and then leave

you to pursue your way alone, or rather in company with your guardian angel? For alone we never are. And this thought of the perpetual companionship of our guardian angel should be a most useful and helpful one to us. How often do we revert to it during the day.

Speaking to a young girl who had been watching some novices in the grounds and on the terraces of a Convent which her father's house overlooked. "It is impossible," she said, "for these novices to do wrong, for wherever they are their novice mistress is with them." And you, my child, said I to the little girl, wherever you go your guardian angel is with you! Ah, let that thought keep us from doing ought that would grieve that Heavenly Spirit. Let the thought that He is ever at hand watching us, more closely, more tenderly than anyone of our sinful race could do, exercise a salutary check upon us, and be to us as the actual and continual guardianship it is in reality, but which our feeble faith is so apt to lose sight of.

The impressionable nature of the girl (she was an Italian) was move by this thought, which remained in her mind perhaps for a few hours; but I wish not that what I now write to the Children of Mary in England should be so easily forgotten, but that these simple words may be as seeds sown in the soul and producing much fruit for the remainder of your lives. Nay, more, that you may meet, you surely will meet the fruit of your holy-kept Saturdays in heaven. Let them be really holy; and how can they be better kept than in union with Our Lady's dispositions on that Saturday which the Church emphatically calls "Holy."

Chapter IV

We promised a few thoughts to help beginners in this little exercise of love. Let us take for our first consideration Our Lady's employment on Holy Saturday, here we attempt to look into our Mother's soul upon the day following that terrible "Good Friday" and to strive to fathom something of the feeling upper most in her mind. There must have been a feeling of intense relief from that fearful tension of all those years of suffering, through, which she bore ever in her heart the knowledge of what was to come. That weight which had pressed upon her pure soul was removed. Her hope that He would rise again on the Third Day was firm, and He was freed from suffering. Who can say what this last thought was to Mary? To

understand it aright we should need to love as she loved, to the annihilation of self. She missed Him; every instant she felt the loss of that sweet Presence; she longed every moment to take His Hand, to hear His Voice, to look into His Face, to look into the eyes which told His love of her. Yes, she wanted Him, how much we cannot say; but she would soon see Him again; however, slowly the hours drag on, the Hope of Mary's Heart remained bright and untarnished. And so it is ever; the hours, the days, the weeks, or years of sorrow drag slowly and wearily on, but the hope of Mary's Heart can sustain us. Let us but make this prayer,

“Hope of the Heart of Mary sustain me,

Plead with my cause before God.”

Cherish this hope in your hearts; offer it to God in moments of doubt, in times of desolation, when you are close to the cross, and a cross without the living Jesus upon it, or at least, seemingly so; a hard, bare cross. Think of Mary, your Mother; offer her grand Hope. Be children of the Mother of Holy Hope. Ah, listen to her voice. Let all your Saturdays be Holy Saturdays in her honor. Enter as far as you may into her dispositions as she waited to meet Jesus—living, glorious, Immortal. You too may thus imitate her by preparing for a fervent Communion on the Sunday. You finish her day by going to confession and washing there your soul, previous to Jesus' visit, awaiting it as Mary waited His visit to her. Offer her ardent longings to supply for your coldness, keeping your thoughts in union with hers.

Thus will you endear yourself to both Jesus and Mary. Jesus will love the soul which honors His Mother's heart, and will dwell therein with delight, even in this world, and prepare it to dwell in the Home above, where the Mother is so anxiously awaiting the coming of her children.

Our considerations of what we may reverently infer from sacred tradition to have been Our Lady's employment on Holy Saturday, lead naturally to the thought of her veneration for the Sacred Relics of the Passion, not indeed on Holy Saturday alone, but throughout the remainder of her life.

There is preserved with great reverence at Lucca an old crucifix carved in wood, said to have been made by order of Nicodemus, into which Our Blessed Lady is said to have placed with her own hands some of the Sacred Relics. There is nothing in this holy belief at

variance with what we might be led to expect of Our Blessed Lady from the knowledge we gather of her in the brief but pregnant words of Holy Scripture, and much which may help greatly to bring that sweet Mother more sensibly before us, and also make it easier for us to enter into her own dispositions.

There is preserved at Messian a letter which pious belief attributes to Our Blessed Lady herself. It is addressed to the people of the city, and is such as we might expect from the Mother of the Infant Church, containing not many words but replete with heavenly wisdom. We said that the authenticity of this letter rested upon pious belief. We would gladly reproduce the Epistle, but as that would necessitate the reproduction of the various prescripts of the indulgences attached to the prayer we refrain from doing so, or our little handbook would become longer than we intend it to be. We may perhaps devote a little work later on this subject.

We have not, it is true, in America many relics which are known, though, following the belief that a portion of the vast continent was evangelized by the Apostle St. Thomas, it is more than probable that he carried some of the relics so dear to the little band of Apostles with him.

It is also more than a mere conjecture that the Irish were in America before Columbus had discovered that New World, and doubtless they also carried with them some relics. However that may be, it is certain that many parts of American soil have been watered by the blood of martyrs—amongst the most precious of relics and the seed of Christianity. Let us now strive that the land of our birth or the land of our choice may be fruitful in saintly souls, in confessors and virgins of Christ.

We may, and blamelessly, find pleasure in the affairs of the day, in using our minds upon the great questions agitating the political world. Nevertheless, although Almighty God “has given up this world to the discussion of the children of men,” and we are remarkable among the nations of the earth for the untiring activity with which progress in all worldly matters is pursued amongst us, let us show that our religion is also with us an earnest matter, a real thing, governing our lives; that it is not merely a thing demanding a fair amount of attention, like any

ordinary business matter, but the important thing, the one thing necessary, not to be neglected though we may be busy about many things.

To keep this mind which so loves to exercise itself upon new and curious things, to keep it in restraint, if we may so say, for to guard the mind well from useless and frivolous thoughts is a great act, but to guard it well against useful but importunate and irrelevant matters is a greater, and to break it to attend to the things we have set before us for our consideration is yet a greater. Taken in this light and adhered to faithfully, our little sacrifice, our offering of our thoughts, assumes a nobler guise than when we first essayed to make it. We see clearly, then, that, small though it is, Our Mother will gladly accept the little mark of her children's love, and bless them with a mother's blessing.

Holy Saturday is to us, in our degree, what it was to Mary in her infinitely higher degree, a day of intense relief. Yet we shall ever no created being can ever realize what that relief was to her. That fearful Friday is over. It can never come again. It is finished. Jesus has died. He will never die again. Death shall no more have dominion over him.

We breathe a sigh of relief when Holy Saturday comes. We feel it a relief even to put away the considerations, the meditations upon that fearful time of sacrilege and crime, of sin such as the world had never before witnessed—the sin of Decide! God murdered by His children! The Creator slain by His creatures! Our Blessed Lady, alone of all creatures, took in fully the reality of this sin, all its frightfulness, all its horrors. Here was the most perfect act of contrition which ever ascended to heaven from this earth. Though she had no part in this fearful crime, as we each one of us had. What fearful weight of agony was lifted on that first Holy Saturday. We count the Passion time by days, but neither by Jesus nor Mary was it so counted. To the Eternal its scenes were ever present, and to our Blessed Mother the sorrows which were to come. That record, foretold to her in the prophecy of Simeon, hung over her life; and now that fearful tragedy she had seen with such unspeakable dread approaching more nearly, year after year, has been accomplished. It is over; it can never take place again. Jesus has triumphed over death and hell! Solemn as the day is, it is a day of joy and of triumph. Sweet Mother! we, too, are glad; we, too rejoice with Thee! we, too, are glad in Thy happiness, Thy joy in the

happiness of Jesus! Thy children will be like to Thee, and will rejoice with Thee, commencing to do now on earth what the blessed do in heaven—to rejoice in the joy of their God—whilst they are yet upon the earth. Yes, the sentiments of Our Lady's Heart on that first Holy Saturday should be the type of ours each day of our lives, because Jesus is in joy. He will suffer no more. It is over. God be praised! God be forever blessed! Thanks be to our dear Lord for His sufferings. Thanks be to the Most High. He will suffer no more.

Let us, as we quietly meditate on the gentle, patient Mother of Holy Hope, striving, as we daily do, to learn more of her interior dispositions, let us now resolve, or renew the resolution already made, to live in a loving spirit of joy and thanksgiving with a firm hope.

We are told that one of the reasons, which caused Holy Church to devote the Sabbath especially to Our Lady, was her glad hope in the Resurrection. Let us imitate her in this. Let us hope on, though at times we must feel downcast and lonely. Let us look forward to that grand Resurrection when we shall all rise again with the same bodies, at the day of judgement; when we shall see Him whom we have loved on earth, in whom we have believed, and who will appear to us then in all His loveliness and in the majesty of His Glory.

We shall look upon that great day, and we shall meet the eyes of our Divine Lord! What shall we say when God shall arise to judge? My God! whom I have loved, for whom I have lived, in whom I have hoped. Yes, we praised Him in tribulation, in distress. We loved Him in trouble and temptation; we blessed Him in sorrow and suffering; we hope against hope in darkness and despair, and we have now our reward. We can look upon our Love; we can meet His Eyes without shrinking. We can stretch out our arms fearlessly to Him, as a child stretches out its arms to its mother, and our God will draw us to Himself. We are His. He is sure of us. Oh, the ineffable joy of our Mother's heart on that day when her children of every age, of every clime, of every tongue, are brought by the angel's trumpet to the valley of Josaphat, and stand before their Creator, glad, triumphant, victorious, faithful!

But, oh, the horror, we shrink from the thought, of the faithless ones, the criminal, and the condemned! We cast one glance at them, that we

may spur ourselves onward lest we be of their unhappy number. Just one glance at the cowardly, shamefaced, selfish crew who belong henceforth to the devil, body and soul, who are his, not Christ's; belonging to the cruel Satan whom they have deliberately chosen for their master, not to the gentle Jesus, whose sweet yoke and light burden they cast off.

We shudder as we turn away from the fearful contemplation and we cry to our Mother, "Save us, O Mother, in that dread day. Help us now, that on that day we may meet Jesus without fear; that we may not merit by our infidelity His reproach and repulse.

Let us think, as we consider with our Mother the sweet truths of our Lord's resurrection that we, too, are to rise again. That His resurrection is the type of ours. Let us think of this, that we may urge ourselves on to fight still more earnestly against our triple enemies, the devil, the world and the flesh. What signify our little troubles and sufferings here if we but save ourselves from eternal sufferings. Let us not be content to consider things in general, let us descend to particulars and find out what is our greatest hindrance in our dear Lord's service. In what does the devil most readily and more frequently vanquish us? Where is our weak point? Do we know it? Well for us if we do. If we do not let us pray for light to know what is of such weighty importance in the matter of our salvation. Many, for want of this knowledge, have been dragged to perdition. If they had sought to know their failings they might have fought against and overcome them, but they cared not to know them; they shrank from self examination, and they became gradually careless, callous, deeming their sins of little consequence, vainly presuming, forgetful of those words of the Holy Spirit, "He who contemneth small things shall fall by little and little." Again, the scriptures tells us to pray, "From my hidden sins, O God, deliver me."

This thought of the ease with which we may, nay, assuredly will if we take not heed to ourselves, glide into the careless way which leads to sin and to perdition, is an uncomfortable one, and because we do not like it we are apt to put it aside, but we are unwise. Let us, in the presence of our dear Lady, accuse ourselves of what we know and acknowledge that there are many faults, many sins even, hidden in our souls which we do not know, but which He knows, which He sees. Let

us silently review in our own hearts the sins of the past, the littlenesses, the meannesses, the utter unworthiness of the present. We need scarcely be afraid of exaggeration.

See our immortification, our greediness, our slothfulness, our love of ease, our selfishness, our coldness in God's service, our little fervor, our want to charity in thought, in word and in deed. How have we fulfilled, how do we now fulfill, our Lord's commandment to love one another as He has loved us?

Ah, let us commence at once, let us arise to a new life, let us look upon our Lord, taking to Himself for all eternity that beautiful Body, now immortal, which we so long to see, which, please God, we shall see, and let us take new heart to persevere in His sweet service. We shall one day see our Risen Jesus; we shall clasp His Hand as we clasp the hand of a friend. We shall look into His Face; nay, with the beloved disciple, we shall lay our head upon His breast. He will enfold us in His arms and fill us with everlasting peace.

Turn to Jesus in the Tabernacle where He dwells for love of us. Humble yourself before Him. He will speak without sound of words: "Vacate et videte, quoniam ego sum Deus."

"Be still, and see that I am God." To the contrite and humble Jesus will breathe His earthly greeting, "Peace be to you; my peace I leave you, my peace I give unto you."

Not as the world giveth doth Jesus give, but His own peace, unlike ought of this earth. Those who receive it rejoice indeed as Jesus wishes them to rejoice, and as Mary rejoiced in the joy and triumph of Jesus. As we contemplate our Mother on that first Holy Saturday, may we not exclaim in the words the Church puts into the mouth of her children at the Paschal time; "This is the day the Lord hath made; let us be glad and rejoice in it."

Chapter V.

OUR LADY WITH THE INSTRUMENTS OF THE PASSION

We have thought of Our Mother on the Saturday, which immediately

followed the fearful tragedy of that first Good Friday. Let us consider for a little while, or take a few thoughts for further consideration, Our Mother contemplating the instruments of the Passion of Her Son.

The three long hours have passed; Mary still stands on Calvary, white and worn. The fair lily of Jerusalem is a beautiful picture in the sight of the Angels—a beautiful picture of her God. She has borne sorrow like to the sorrow of no other purely human creature. She stands there upon the Mount with that Precious Blood, visible upon Her, which had purchased Her Immaculate Conception. She is there, the first and fairest fruit of the Passion of Jesus She knew it and her soul was in joy even on the Bloodstained summit of Calvary. Mary knew she was a joy to Jesus. Ah, Mary! there was not a moment to Thy sinless life in which thou wert not a joy to Jesus, nor was there a single moment in which this knowledge was not thy joy!

Do we not sometimes in our meditations dwell upon this thought, that we thy children know one bitter sorrow, which thou, sweet Mother, hast never known. The blood of Jesus purchased thine Immaculate Conception. He suffered not for thy sins for thou had'st none. Ah, Mother! we look upon Jesus suffering and say to ourselves, "It was for my sins He suffered, I have been the cause of His sufferings." and we say so truly, Magdalene, our place is with thee; we understand well the contrition of thy sorrowing heart, so close to the Immaculate One, thou didst venerate with Her the instruments of the Sacred Passion. It was Mary who handled them; the Magdalene looked on, and with her we too look on.

Our Blessed Mother takes the crown of cruel thorns in Her hands; with what love does She handle them, for they are made inexpressibly precious by the blood of Jesus Christ. That crown, the smallest particle of which is so sacred a relic to us, to the Church, what was it to Mary? It had pierced the Head of Jesus; the points were deeply tinged with the Precious Blood. Some of us have been so privileged as to see these thorns and to venerate them with the deepest veneration; but does our veneration come anything near the veneration with which they were regarded by Mary? Most certainly not. And the Magdalene, what did she feel as she gazed upon those thorns? She mourned over the guilty thoughts of her past life—thoughts opposed by the law of God, harbored with a guilty pleasure. Ah me, she sorrowed with the

deepest repentance, for she well knew that Jesus had suffered His special torture, this pain in reparation for her evil thoughts. He is the victim for sin. He suffered this most painful crowning for the proud and guilty thoughts of the whole world. Let this be also our thought as we look upon the two models of love set before us: as we look upon Our Lady, as we look upon the Magdalen, the purity of innocence and the purity of penance. We learn too which is to be our place. We learn our place in God's Church, and the penitential attitude, which alone becomes us. What shall be said of sins of thought alone? We make too light of our thoughts. There is a world within us, which needs perpetual watching and curbing, guarding.

We very seldom sin in act, unless we have first sinned in thought. Who sins against charity in speech unless they have first cherished uncharitable thoughts? And who examine yourself on this point. Have you allowed yourself no thought to the prejudice of others?

What a vista opens perhaps before you, of unbridled thought, of liberty of judgement which you have allowed yourself! If this is indeed so, think not that it was the sins of the Magdalen which caused the Sacred Head of Jesus to be crowned with its cruel diadem of thorns! Think of yourself: "It was my sins, my own sins, which caused this torture to the Sacred Head of Jesus." Then, drawing close to the side of your Mother, consider what were Her thoughts as She held that crown of thorns stained with the blood of Jesus, in Her most pure hands. She knew full well that She had not caused Him pain. Yet He had suffered, how He had suffered, and Mary's heart overflowed with love in which there was no sting of remorse. Purity of the heart of Mary. What a joy it is to us to think of this sinful earth one creature is born stainless, holy, pure, but not one thought during Her whole life had opposed the will of God, no thought had ever crossed Her mind contrary to His holy law. She was the one stainless one, the lily among thorns. "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." Ah, well may we glory in thee, sweet Mother, and thank God for having created thee Immaculate. Our hearts well up with joy within us at the beautiful picture of our Mother looking upon the instruments of the Passion, looking upon them as we cannot look upon them. There was the life-blood of Her Divine Son upon them. Blood which Her own pure heart had furnished. She saw how deeply the cruel thongs had pierced His Sacred Brow. The mind of Jesus had

been ever busy for His people. Ever planning, devising something for their good. His thoughts were ever upon His own. Those to whom He had made Himself a Brother, and this is how His people have repaid Him: They have plaited sharp thorns and pressed them deeply into that Sacred Brow. “Ecce Homo” – Behold the Man- had cried the Roman governor, presenting the Thorn-crowned Savior to the Jewish rabble. “Ecce Homo!”

Mary, as she held that crown, now thought she heard again that cry. Again she saw that venerable face, with the blood trickling from wounds caused by those fearful thorns. And now she repeats to us that injunction: “Ecce Homo.” She would fain show him to each one of us. Ah, Mother; impress that sacred likeness on our hearts that we may bear about with us some resemblance of our Crucified Lord, some likeness to His Passion. That the wan, white Face of Jesus may follow us everywhere, not with a look of reproach, but with a look that shows us that He appreciated the little efforts we make of reparation and atonement. Look again at our Mother, holding in her most pure hands the Crown of Thorns. The love with which she gazes upon it is all her own. We cannot approach it, nor dare we attempt to fathom its depths. Yet ever our poor sinful hearts can rejoice in her, who alone, of all human beings, had no hand in the placing of that dire crown on the Head of the Creator. We had our part in the cruel tragedy. It was our sinful thoughts, which demanded this fearful expiation.

Do we wish to make reparation? Do we wish to show some little atoning love? We can do this. We may do this, and not only as we have already seen, by offering our daily pains, vexations, etc., but in a manner even greater than this, to many natures, by the watching of, and offering our thoughts, putting a restraint upon them. We are not, of course, speaking here of sinful thoughts. We may begin by a resolution to keep a strict guard upon ourselves in this for a certain space of time, and then gradually increase it.

This we shall undoubtedly find a marvelous aid to the attainment of holiness. The kingdom of God is within us. This we know; but they grow very much in nearness to God who realize this truth, keeping it ever before them; striving to keep their interior in order, lest there should arise within them an opposite kingdom not of God. No, but of His enemy, or a kingdom of self, given up to their own sinful desires.

This little mortification, this little offering faithfully adhered to, cannot fail to draw us nearer to our Mother's Heart. We shall be, as it were, drawing out the thorns tenderly from our dear Lord's Head; we shall solace Him, we shall repay Him in our little measure for the suffering He has undergone.

Then there were the nails, which had supported His Sacred Body on that hard bed of the cross. We have seen them, great rough nails. Had we not seen them we could scarcely have believed their size and roughness. Reverently our Lady took them in her hand and gazed upon them. Through and through had they pierced the hands and feet of Jesus, leaving fearful gaping wounds, as their size and bluntness would show.

The stain of the Most Precious Blood was upon them. Again and again she gazed with sorrowing love. They had supported the Body of Jesus.

When we were permitted to see one of these nails we could perceive no trace of blood, as we had done on the thorn. Possibly our Lady was better able to wipe the Precious Blood from the iron than from the wood of the thorns which were imbued in that sacred stream. The head of the nail is mushroom shaped and the stem fearfully thick and blunt. The awfulness of the wounds caused by these alone is dreadful to contemplate. Yet many saw them and realized all that they meant, and that on those gaping wounds the whole weight of the Sacred Body of Jesus hung for three long hours.

Precious relics of the Church! Let us treasure them with Mary. It is a devotion well pleasing to Jesus. The Eternal Word took really and actually a human body, and that Body was pierced and torn by human instruments: How, then, should those instruments, rendered holy by that marvelous contact and become to us as the signs of our redemption, be revered by Christ's Church?

Holy writers tell us that one of the reasons why all the Precious Blood was not reassumed when Our Lord rose again was that the Church should be endowed with this most precious of all relics.

In venerating, in honoring the instruments of the Passion, some of

which still bear, as we have said, that precious stain upon them, we remind ourselves more forcibly of the truth that Our Blessed Lord had really a mortal and perishable body, like unto ours. We thank Him that He has left such treasures to His Church, and the faithful think themselves favored, and rightly do they think so, if they are privileged to obtain something which has even touched these relics.

Then there are the relics of our dear Lord's garments. There is the purple robe, the sacred winding sheet in which His body was wrapped after death. These the Church jealously guards, and wise indeed are they who prize the smallest particle of such relics beyond all the treasures of this world. They follow in the footsteps of the sorrowful Mother. A far lesser faith than Mary's knew by divine light what honor was due even to the raiment of our Lord.

We read in the Gospel narrative how the poor woman approached, saying within herself, "If I but touch the hem of His garment I shall be healed."

Why is our faith so far below this? We are permitted to touch not only the hem of His garment but himself, but our faith is too weak. We approach Him not. Storms of temptation arise about us; we feel powerless; we fall, and say that we cannot help it. Maybe we are right; but one could have helped it for if we had sought His help. We fell because we had not the faith of that poor woman who said that she had but to touch the hem of His garment to be healed.

We received in baptism the gift of faith which should enable us to invoke the name of Jesus, to seek His help with a grand hope, but because we do not seek it, because we either say we cannot help ourselves or because we rely too much upon ourselves. We use not the means of welfare He has given us; we fall because we do not value grace, do not seek the help we should certainly receive.

In Catholic countries there is, as might be expected, far more devotion to relics than with us in Protestant England. When the relics in various churches are exposed for veneration a benediction is given with them, which the faithful receive with great devotion. This is indeed such a common practice abroad that when Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament is to be understood it is always so expressed—Benediction

of the Most Holy, the most venerable of the most August; whereas in England we use ordinarily on the word Benediction, not being accustomed to any other than Benediction of the Most Holy Sacrament.

With regard to our devotion to relics, we are too apt to catch something of the coldness of the Protestant atmosphere in which we moved, and we should do well, therefore, to consider from time to time the significance of these sacred relics, and to enter more fully into the spirit of the Church in this regard.

Pious imagination may linger long upon our Blessed Mother, visiting one by one the objects, which had grown so precious. There was the column of the scourging, for instance; the Cross itself; the steps of the Praetorium. We may imagine, or we may even know it some little way what were Her feelings, with what sentiments of reverential sorrow and love She contemplated everything that had touched the body of Jesus, everything connected with our dear Lord.

There are but words. We love what has touched the body of Jesus. We feel that we cannot sufficiently reverence the smallest particle of the wood of the Cross or the purple robe, but She was the sinless Mother of that sacred body! Think well of this, and you will better understand the office of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. In our meditations on the Passion – meditations undoubtedly helped by visits of the places or relics connected with it – we grow in love for the wounded flesh of Jesus.

We turn to Mary, our Mother, and beg of Her that our bodies, aye, and souls too, so please God, may be wounded for His love. We will feed on that wounded flesh, and grow by its strength in similarity to it. Soul and body must be likened to Jesus. Practical acts of the body work wonders in the soul. Why are these not more insisted upon? Do we really meditate upon the Passion, and then come away and grumble at the first vexation, the first mortification we meet?

If our piety is not true piety, the gift of the Holy Spirit, it is merely sentiment and delusion. We might even use harsher words and say, mere cant and hypocrisy. We will deprive ourselves of nothing. The flesh must be pampered, and so our inferior will rise against the

superior and vanquishes it. We rebel at every fancied injury we receive; our feelings are hurt, we say, as an excuse for our self-love and pride. Let us try some little mortification, bringing the senses into subjection, lest our body carry our soul away, and we fall into some act which will incur the anger of God and give the angels no longer the joy they had in us.

God is not in the soul, which finds its joy in the delights of this world. Spiritual consolations are not given to those who have all the nature craves for. Meditation will bring home to us the truth. That it is unfitting that Christians should suffer nothing, voluntarily, when in that Body, made like unto ours, the Son of God so suffered and was wounded for us. We shall acknowledge the folly of meditating over the scenes of the Passion, and then going away without as much as the good desire of suffering something for Him.

May God preserve us from this illusion, and make us earnest in well doing.

Turn now, again, to Mary, and invoke Her help. That since we must necessarily suffer, we may suffer well and profitably. That we may suffer willingly, so making a virtue of necessity, as it is permitted us to do. All good and all evil is in that wonderful will of ours. What a pity; what a loss is it to themselves, that by far the greater part of mankind suffer unwillingly, losing the merit of suffering.

Our Blessed Lady loves all Her children, all of that vast family bequeathed to Her, in the person of the beloved disciple, at the foot of the Cross. Yet there are assuredly some who give her joy about others, and these are they who for the love of Jesus suffer their souls and bodies to be wounded; not those who are dragged and forced to suffer against their will, but those who suffer willingly and with love.

Holy Scripture says of our Divine Lord: “He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and He shall not open his mouth.” – Isaiah 1:3

We may without irreverence compare this picture of our dear Lord with what we may one day have witnessed ourselves in seeing some animal dragged forcibly to the slaughter house, filling the air with

discordant yells and cries. This last picture too truly figures the manner in which the majority of mankind suffer, and very probably has been too often our own case, also. Please God it shall be so no more; we will renew our offering to our Lady, that when the time comes for our souls to be bruised, lacerated, we may not fail Her, and the thought of the dread instruments of the Passion may remind us that our bodies must be bruised and wounded also.

If we would keep our souls really in union with Jesus, the two things must go together; we must be crucified, body and soul; and this is true of all Christian members of Christ's Mystical Body.

Our Mother will give Her blessing of these few thoughts and remind us that when the flesh inclines to revel and the soul cries out in extreme anguish, then, then is the time to prove our fidelity, our devotion; that then mayhap God will reward us, when we have performed with difficulty acts contrary to our natural inclinations, by giving us that sweetness in suffering which He gave to the Saints. This is a reward He frequently gives to His tired servants, but we may not expect it always. Let us strive for, aim at generosity in small sufferings, and the God may account us worthy to suffer, as did the martyrs by a special outpouring of God's Spirit, not alone with patience, but with Joy and much peace.

May our Mother help us by these considerations to walk through life with sacred hidden sufferings, borne for love of God; and may we ever say, in life and at the hour of death, "I live, now not I, but Christ Jesus liveth in me."

Now, lovers of Mary! we will meet together on Saturdays to drive the coldness of this world from our hearts. Warming them in love of the Mother's Heart we shall thus grow in love for all around, for as on Saturday, we shall strive our utmost to have none but *thoughts of love*. This simple practice will make us grow rapidly in that greatest of all virtues—the love of one another. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciple, if you love, one for another." This is the grace the Mother of Fair Love, the Mother who brought forth Love Incarnate, gives to those who love Her. Who can refuse this little petition? We are asking you for the love of Our Lady to consecrate to Her one day of the seven. Do a little for Her, and She will do a great deal for you

and yours.

Make a resolution to try one month first, it will be the happiest month of your life. Saturday will be a day, a place if we may so express it, of rendezvous, of meeting with Mary. The angels are whispering to you; my angels and yours, and surely you will not be deaf to their gentle whisper, but say to your Mother at once, "I will try to keep Saturday holy for love of you, and I will offer to you on that day the thoughts of my heart. Bless my little resolution, may it fructify, so that in time the cry of the Sacred Heart may be answered within me. I seek a pure heart, and there is the place of my abode." The Mother of pure love will, by Her weekly visits to the heart which offers to Her this little gift on Her own day, obtain for that soul that gift of God—a pure heart, sweet, fresh and fragrant, breathing the perfume of Her own dear presence, a sanctuary wherein God Himself longs to dwell; for Jesus' words stand good to all who love His Mother. They must love Him also; His words stand true forever. If any man love Me, My Father will love him and we will come to Him and take up our abode with Him.

"Lord, where dwellest Thou?" ask in all simplicity as did the disciples of old, "Lord, where dwellest Thou," and Jesus looked upon the disciples, and that dear Human Voice said, "Come and see," and they went and saw where He abode. Where think you did they find Him? Even as the shepherd on that first Christmas night—"with Mary, His Mother." And so dear readers, souls beloved of God, will you find Him. May angels now lead you to that new Eden, that Immaculate Conception of God, that creation in which this earth may so truly glory, whom we salute joyfully in the words of the angel and St. Elizabeth: "Hail Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with Thee, Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the Fruit of Thy Womb, Jesus."

THE END