

**English translation of
“Darts of Divine Love”
by Cornelio Castellucci da Urbino.**

**Translated
By Father Patrick Colbourne O.F.M.Cap.**

Translator’s note.

This translation is based on the introduction, text and footnotes which were published by P. Costanzo Cargnoni O.F.M. Cap. In I Frati Cappuccini: Documenti e testimonianze dell primo secolo, Edizioni Frate Indovino, Perugia, vol III/1, pp.1213 - 1261. The only additions to the notes made by the translator are references to Francis of Assisi: The Early Documents, edited by Regis Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., J. A. Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M. and William J. Short O.F.M. Conv., New York City Press, New York, London, Manila, for an English version of quotations from the Writings or Biographies of St Francis.

Introduction by Castanzo Cargnoni O.F.M. Cap.

“Darts of Divine Love” by Cornelio Castellucci da Urbino.

We only have only a few biographies of Cornelio Castelio Castellucci da Urbino who died in Fermo in 1603. To make up for this, in the space of five years from 1593 to 1598, we have two Venetian editions of his spiritual book Darts of Divine Love. This is a work that contains emotionally moving deep spirituality. When the author dedicated the work to the Cardinal of Santa Severina on 19th August 1593 he wrote that his purpose and aim in writing was that: “After careful consideration using much diligence and warm affection I finally recognised (just like the vessel of election Paul the Apostle) that the objective of the Christian life and all the commandments and counsels of the Gospel amounts to nothing but the love of God, which leads to the love of neighbour [...] and that convinced me to write the present work, which has no other objective than to ignite and enflame every faithful soul. I also wanted to have this based on the life, passion and death of our Redeemer, Jesus, who is the most loving spouse of our souls. [...] Thus I called it Darts of Divine Love, because in them I had found many devout considerations and pious meditations which, like arrows, pierced the hearts of whoever wished to meditate with ardent affection.”

The content and purpose of the volume are set out in the Forward to the whole volume and this explains how in anticipation of introducing the meditations which specifically concern the Passion and death of the Lord (that make up Parts II, III and IV of the work) that he intends Part I to be six splendid meditations on the love of God that “six incentives and important motives for divine love” to be read – he wrote- “with diligence and attention” so that “whoever has fallen in love with the love of God will also be wounded and struck by the suffering and sorrow of Christ.” From these meditations we have chosen the third which is deeply meaningful and which clearly demonstrates the author’s emotion and passion which even today fills us with rich, authentic spiritual intuition. (n. 1)

The following part of the work, contains its own internal plan that is based on the image of David's son Absalom who while hanging in an oak tree was struck in the heart with three darts which is understood as a symbol of Christ on the cross, hanging by three nails and wounded by a lance. These "are three very severe sorrows that are to be contemplated in the river-bed of the spirituality of Christ's "mental sufferings." The first dart represents the enormous suffering he felt through the injuries, the shame and the torments that he suffered. The second dart represents the great compassion he had for his Mother. The third dart represents the pain he felt at seeing his passion gain so little profit [...]. "It is on these three strikes", the author writes, "that I have based all the second part. They are nothing more than three darts of your ardent love."

Probably the most beautiful and inspirational pages of Castelucci's book are those that deal with Mary and her sufferings. They contain authentic pearls of Christian piety and seraphic emotion. Because of this we have chosen some of the more expressive pages. (nn. 2-4).

A special chapter, which is chapter 2 of Part IV, has been dedicated to inner suffering which he calls "the suffering of compassion" or "intrinsic heartfelt suffering of mental pain." We have placed this in n. 5. Part V which is the most developed because the author never tires of arousing souls to recognise the actual suffering of Christ Crucified. For example, he does this in chapters 6 and 7, which we have summarised in n. 6.

The pages concerning Christ's death, which can be read in chapter 10 of part VI, are an example of intense affective contemplation. We have placed them in n. 7. Something that also stands out in the work is the splendid prayers that bring the meditation to an end. They form models of mental prayer which soon become a blaze of affective love which is the essence of the Capuchin way of praying. We have given a few examples of these prayers.

The last part, the fifth, touches briefly on the "joy of paradise." "Paradise" in this context (n. 8) has an unmistakable significance.

1. *How God loves us completely, and how the love that He has for us is eternal, and as old as God, and the reason why we ought to love God, and what is the extent to which He ought to be loved. [Part I, chapter 3].*

5014. "In the beginning God created heaven and earth."¹ These words which are taken from Genesis, apply to the angels, the heavens and the elements, which all had a beginning unlike God and love both of which had no beginning.

When speaking about the face and image of the Lord Scripture says that it is like a burning fire.² This is the same as to say that the first time the Prophet Moses saw God which was on Mount Sinai when he went up to receive the law, that the glory that was on God's face was like a fire of love that burned within itself. It says within itself because in the Old Testament God saved all love for Himself. It is a great

¹ Gen 1, 1,

² Ex 24, 17. In the margin in the text: *God's face is a fire of love.*

consolation for a sinner like me to know that our God has a loving face and that His Blessed Son speaks words of love and that He commands us to do nothing but love. Therefore we can say that the love that reigns in God is so great that He will not deal with us except in a loving way.

No one ought to wonder when they hear it said that love began with God, and that God is very friendly and that this is the glory of God.³ What they should wonder at is that if it were possible for love to be separated from God, there would be no God in heaven or on earth.

Moving slightly ahead we will see that in the abyss of love the more deeply we wish to enter the more we marvel and the more secrets we discover, because in divine and human love a greater part of love remains hidden within than what is revealed in words.⁴

5015. Thus the circumstances are these. Before Moses blessed all the twelve tribes of Israel among the other things that he said to them, he repeated this. The Lord appeared on Mount Pharan together with thousands of saints and with a fiery law in his right hand and He loved the people. This was to tell us that we should move out of Egypt. This was the second time that the Lord appeared to me on Mount Pharan surrounded by thousands of saints and I saw that in his right hand he was holding a copy of the law that was burning with live flames of fire which meant that he loved the people.⁵

In the divine Writings that are in God's right hand we see that they are in the best and richest place near him. When the Gospel speaks about Christ it says that he is seated at God's right hand and we should interpret this as meaning that the Word's humanity is seated in the most exalted place in glory which is the place where the greatest glory is to be enjoyed.

The fiery law that Moses saw alongside of God was undoubtedly the most exalted divine love and this must mean that such love is not just to be found close to God, but also on God's arm. There is only one love, because, speaking as a Christian and without the slightest hesitation, this is God's love, the very love of God. When Holy Scripture says that Our Lord had the law that was full of love on his right arm it is the same as saying that any law that is not founded on God is not worth much, or of any advantage since it is all measured only by human standards without the intervention of our divine Father. God will not support it and mankind will not wish to obey it.⁶

5016. We should note carefully that Moses saw nothing but a fiery law in God's arm. This makes it clear that God is exempt from all law, whether divine or human, except from the great law of love which is binding on him, and which binds and obliges all those who love him. It was the law of love that God held in his hand and it even binds the whole of the Trinity.⁷

Only someone who is not a Christian could be apprehensive or scandalised at hearing this said about a person who is the most high God and who is beyond all comparison or about hearing that all the Three Divine Persons are bound by this law.

³ In the margin: *Love had its beginning with God.*

⁴ In the margin: *Much more love is hidden in the heart of the lover, than what the tongue makes public.*

⁵ Cf. Dt 33,n1-4 (*Vulg.*)

⁶ Cf. Mk 16, 10. In the margin: *The meaning of God's right hand.*

⁷ In the margin: *God is subject to no other law than to the law of love.*

Therefore we must remember that all law in the world is reduced to just two things namely natural law and positive law.⁸ Positive law is the customs and constitutions that a king establishes for his kingdom and governors for the people whom they govern. Natural law is that to which people are born, raised, live and die in so far as natural law is based on reason while positive law is based on convention.

Since positive law is human we should heed it, read it, and learn it and try to observe it. However, since it is inscribed within our heart we have no need to discover⁹ it, read or learn it, but only to put it into practice and thus it is sufficient for a person simply to follow what reason dictates to know what he has to do and what he as a human being should be careful about doing. In many situations positive law does not oblige, nor should it concern us any more than the legislator prescribes. Because natural law is divine it obliges by its nature and because it is strong and vigorous in itself we can never depart from what is laid down nor be dispensed from what it prescribes.

5017. Both these laws are to be found in God¹⁰ having the same form and content as they are to be found in us. Positive law controls the angels, the elements and human beings by bringing about change as it pleases, as their master and adding to them what appears to be good as their creator. This takes place in such a way that nothing more needs to be said than “let it be so”. If their master wishes to create or destroy them he only has to say “so be it”.¹¹

God’s natural law is quite different from positive law that has its origin in God in so far as what is natural does not depend on what we know as his will, but upon what is essentially divine in him which directs everything that comes from him in the depths of his wisdom in the same way and manner as these things exist in God in his very being and essence.¹²

The intelligence of God possesses such a high degree of perfection, is so completely perfect and most perfect that it cannot make a mistake in the judgements that it makes. It cannot happen that it is not aware of what it is deciding so that it is God, who confers integrity on the natural and divine law. The natural law exists in God as a property and is united with the divine wisdom in a bond of unity.

Thus the conclusion of this deep theology will be consequently that just as in the case of positive law, God rules over all his creatures, so in the case of natural law he is in control as the Creator. We should understand and believe this as this kind of law is divine by nature and it governs with total integrity.

5018. Thus having proved that since in God the law of love is God’s natural law, and that God’s natural law comes from God’s intelligence, and that his intelligence is never the same as the divine will, and that the essence of divinity is an abyss of divine love, it was reasonable to conclude above that God is love, as Sacred Scripture says. “The Lord God is a consuming fire,” St Paul says the same thing as does St John. “God is charity. God is love.”¹³ Thus he knows nothing but love. He commands nothing but that we ought to love. He wishes nothing but to love. He is concerned about nothing but loving. What is more, he loves himself and me with the same love.

⁸ In the margin: *All law is reduced to: natural or positive.*

⁹ In the margin: *We discover it in God.*

¹⁰ In the margin: *Laws that are to be found in God.*

¹¹ Cf. Gen 3. In the margin: *So great is God’s power*

¹² In the margin: *The intelligence of God.*

¹³ Cf. Dt 4, 34; Heb 12, 23; 1 Jn 4, 8. In the margin: *God is love.*

However though occasionally he ceases to love me because I do not deserve his love, he never ceases to love himself since he can never be any less, nor can his merits diminish.¹⁴

I am not satisfied with having proved that love and God is the same thing and that they involve something divine. I still want to prove how being loved is pleasing to God, and how He is the oldest lover in the world in as much as all those who speak about love know him as the source of love and the leader of those who love.¹⁵

If ancient philosophers were concerned about trying to discover who invented the hammer, the saw and the nail and the axe as instruments for work, it is surely much more important to know who devised the art of loving especially as the art and activity of loving are matters of the heart whereas the nail and axe simply pertain to the work of a carpenter.

5019 I learnt about disobedience from my father. I learnt about gluttony from Eve who was my mother. I learnt about idolatry from Cain. I learnt about adultery from King David, about cursing from King Sennacherib, to weep from St Pater. I learnt to love from my good Jesus who became man out of love so the man might become God.¹⁶

The kind of knowledge which we acquire comes from the school which we attend. I can tell you that we learn nothing but foolishness in the school of the world, nothing but evil intentions in the devil's school. In the school of the flesh we learn nothing but sin. In the school of humanity we learn only how not to love. In your school, O my God, we learn nothing else but how to love and that there is nothing more lovable or commanded by Christ than to love.

Arise, arise, my dear soul, leave aside and depart from all other evil and deprived schools and attend God's school which is good, holy and perfect in order to learn and acquire divine love. Since the love of God is like God Himself containing the characteristics and nobility of God because (as the Doctor says):¹⁷ Love is noble and generous, wise and beautiful, architect of something that is good, sweet, strong, fruitful, gentle, sincere, chaste, beyond description and vanquishes everything. Love is completely joyful, completely affable, completely desirable, completely enchanting. Love penetrates and destroys all difficulties. It overcomes and conquers, lifts up and brings down. Love is above and below. It wounds and heals. It bestows life and death. It cannot be hidden or bring about anything but love. All that it bestows is bestowed for love not seeking or desiring anything but love. This means that the heart of anyone who loves perfectly always thinks and speaks about love. Love preserves memories, enlightens the intellect, enflames the will, arouses feelings, sanctifies the soul and completely transforms the person into God. Since this is the case we ought to focus our efforts and attention on acquiring this virtue because it contains all other high and worthy virtues.

5020 O Christian soul if you yearn to obtain the excellent and worthy virtue of the love of God throw yourself towards your kind, clement and loving Lord with all your

¹⁴ In the margin: *God loves with love that loves himself.*

¹⁵ In the margin: *To be loved gives God pleasure.*

¹⁶ In the margin: *God's love teaches us.*

¹⁷ In the margin: *The great strength of the love of God.* "The identity of this Doctor is unknown". It might be St Bernard or Gerson or St Bonaventure. In any case compare the hymn about love with what was written in Book III, ch V of *De imitatione Christi* by Kempis with the first chapter of *Dyalogo del la unione* by B. Cordoni.

heart and affection and say:¹⁸ “O my Lord, which one of us does not know that you are most lovable to us for a thousand reasons both because of your essence and your power, because of your wisdom, infinity, eternity, dignity, richness, meekness, justice and because of all your indescribable perfections? However, three main attributes, your goodness, your mercy and your charity, rouse our hearts and souls. Your goodness stirs us because it is written concerning you: “None is good, except one that is God”,¹⁹ that is you are good by nature. Your mercy moves us because they sing about you “Your tender mercies are beyond all your works”.²⁰ Your charity moves us because you are charity²¹ as your beloved disciple said. O infinite goodness! O Immense mercy! O supreme charity!

Objects which are lovable and desirable have three characteristics. They are beautiful, good and helpful or beneficial²². God is all good, indeed more than all good; all merciful and therefore more than beautiful; all love, and therefore our sole salvation. O, only good of my heart, how could you be other than honourable, helpful, beautiful and desirable? O how good is the Lord and his Spirit²³. How good is God to Israel, to those who are of right heart!²⁴ You are beautiful, O my beloved,²⁵ O good God, beautiful God, goodness itself, substantial goodness, goodness that is the primary origin of all good, beauty that is the source of all other charm and grace, greatest and supreme good, celestial and eternal beauty, goodness replete with sweetness, beauty adorned with every grace!

O God, O God, you alone are good! You cannot but be good! You alone are beautiful! You cannot be thought of in any other way but as being beautiful. You are so good that you cannot think of anything nor do anything but what is good. You are so beautiful that your beauty goes beyond any other thing that is charming.²⁶ Oh, what shall I say concerning this? You are so good that you can draw something good not only out of what is good but also out of what is evil. You are so beautiful that you have the power to make all your enemies love you. O most perfect good! O most beautiful good! You are so good and beautiful that no one could think of anyone more beautiful, as St Augustine said.²⁷ Indeed all the languages on earth could never praise you sufficiently. But what can I, who am so wretched and blind, do? Why can I not make the effort to love you with all my strength as you are so good and beautiful?

5021. Even more can be said concerning your mercy which extends beyond measure and that appears to be like a most dignified queen inviting me to behold your rare beauty and disposition.²⁸ Eternal and immortal God, is your mercy not so outstanding that it crowns your friends with glory in heaven to a degree that goes beyond what they merit? Is it not very generous so that on earth it pardons your enemies? Is it not displayed most profoundly in that it extends to the damned in pain-ridden and sad hell that are being punished and tormented justifiably but less than they deserve? It is not

¹⁸ In the margin: *What you should do in order to obtain the love of God.*

¹⁹ Cf. Mk 10, 18. *Vulg.*)

²⁰ Cf. Ps 144, 9. *(Vulg.)*.

²¹ Jn 4, 8.

²² In the margin: *Three characteristics of lovable objects.* This passage is copied from Verucchino, cf. *nm.* 4914-4915.

²³ Wis 12, 1.

²⁴ Ps 22, 1 *(Vulg.)*

²⁵ Cf. Song 1, 15.

²⁶ In the margin: *God draws good from what is evil.*

²⁷ Cf. St Anselm of Canterbury, *Prologo*, c. 3 and 15. (*PL* 158, 228 and 235).

²⁸ In the margin: *How great is God's mercy.*

very long-enduring in that with patience it waits for ninety or a hundred years or more for the most wicked sinners to repent? Is it not very abundant in that you not only cancel sins and grant gifts, but appear to be never able to be satisfied in giving us good things and raising us up?

Finally do you not show yourself to be most gracious, to the extent that you seem to be more merciful than just,²⁹ even though you are infinitely merciful and infinitely just, though not exercising your justice against men, unless provoked by their sins. When you meet them yourself you freely and spontaneously practice a hundred thousand acts of mercy per minute without then making the slightest request or having merits? O mercy without measure that knows no boarder or limit or any ending! You stoop so quickly to completely forget very wicked sins that lasted for one hundred and twenty years. As Ezekiel said³⁰ the moment that the sinner is sorry for his sins “I will not remember all his iniquities.”

5022 Now both the efficient and final cause of loving God³¹ is the God-man Jesus Christ who is our Saviour because he provides all the conditions for loving him.³² He arouses affection, stirs desire and patiently prepares us for his love by gently embracing us. He is so dear, so kind and sweet. He gives himself to us as if we deserved it, as a reward. He offers himself as food and refreshment to tired and famished souls and arranges to heal and free those who find themselves bound and distressed. Thus he deserves to be loved from the heart for he is faithful, active and sweet.³³ He ought to be loved alone above everything, not only beyond thousands (as the spouse said),³⁴ but beyond all creatures and anything else that is valuable, delightful or beautiful, good, whether corporal or spiritual, present or future, in this life or the next. To represent and assist us he was certainly chosen by the Eternal Father above the thousands of most noble blessed angelic spirits, placed amongst us as a sacrifice for our reconciliation, as the price paid for our redemption, as the healer of our illness, the teacher of perfect discipline as an example for our life and conduct.

It is evident that for every logical reason we ought to love the most lovable Jesus completely and choose him and earnestly seek him above all other created things, as our guide in our blindness, our support of our weakness, our refuge in all of our trials and as our defender, father and brother, as the only spouse worthy of our intimate love. We ought to sigh for him continually and long for his unspeakable deep and uncreated charity. This is why when considering the excess of God’s love for us and our unbounded obligation to return such love St Bernard³⁵ wrote that our love for God should be without calculation or measure,³⁶ because he loved us first, and (I say), in spite of his great majesty, he loved us very much, without being obliged to, without there being any reason from our side for him loving us. He loved us little worms who were vile, filthy sinners. Therefore, what ought to be the extent and measure of our love for such unmeasurable goodness? Especially since our love is not without obligation, serious responsibility or indebtedness, but rather comes from inestimable indebtedness towards our benefactor who provides for us now and always, always

²⁹In the margin: *God is infinitely merciful and just.*

³⁰ Cf. Ezech. 18, 21-22.

³¹ In the margin: *The cause of loving God.*

³³ In the margin: *How much our Saviour is worthy of our love.*

³⁴ Cf. Song 5. 10.

³⁵ St. Bernard, *De diligendo Deo* cap. 1 (PL. 182, 974); see also *Sermo XI in Cantica*, n. 4 (PL. 183, 825s.)

³⁶ Cf. also St Augustine, *De moribus Ecclesiae catholicae*, lib. 1 cap. 8, n. 13 (PL 32, 1316)

accompanies us, stirs us and looks after us with love and into whose debt we fall more and more so as to need to love and want him more and more.

5023 Here we see that he who is immense loves us; he who is eternal loves us beyond the highest charity for (in short) God loves us.³⁷ There is no end to his greatness.³⁸ His wisdom cannot be measured. His peace surpasses all understanding and power.³⁹ His sweetness, beauty and goodness go immeasurably beyond and exceed all the delights of heaven. How can we perhaps hope to have anything to exchange for such immeasurable love? Therefore love that is directed towards God must be approaching what is infinite since God is infinite and immeasurable. So as it reaches for what is infinite it must have no limit or boundary, and be unconditional, limitless and without end.

Arise, arise, my soul, to motivate yourself to love God much more and to enflame yourself much more and lift up the eyes of your mind and your entire spirit and with great devotion and fervour involve your whole heart.⁴⁰ “O God you are most sweet, good, lovable, dearest, admirable, sweet, merciful,, clement, exalted, admirable, indescribable, unutterable, incomparable, powerful, magnificent, great, incomprehensible, infinite, immense, all-powerful, all-compassionate, all-loving, more sweet than the sweetest thing, whiter than snow, more delightful than anything delightful, sweeter than any liquid, more precious than gold and any precious stone. What more could I say? My God, my life, my only hope, giver of infinite mercy, sweetness and my blessings! O, O he who is completely lovable, sweet and delightful! O Lord, give me grace so that I may live for you alone, rest in you alone, love and serve you alone, think of you as I go about, dream of you when I sleep so that I may always be yours and you may be my reward forever and ever and always.”

{Fifteen characteristics of perfect love.}

5024 You command me to ask nothing else of you but love, and you desire so much that I love you that arranged to leave the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar to provide wonderful strength and to transform hearts into loving you. O my God, what am I to you that you command me to love you and that you created me for that purpose and for such a wonderful adventure? To you I am nothing but upset, torment and a cross while for me you are salvation, rest and every good. If then you love me in spite of how I treat you, why do I not love you when I see how you treat me? I do not deserve to love you, but you deserve my love. Allow me to have the courage to love you by following the fifteen characteristics of perfect love by means of which your true friends and the blessed have loved you.⁴¹

I should first love you with shrewd love, O my sweet Redeemer and loving Spouse of my soul, because I desire to love you in order to discover the basis of real amiability or kindness in you, then I should love you robustly so that no adversity

³⁷ In the margin: *He who loves us is indeed God.*

³⁸ Cf. Ps 144, 3 (*Vulg.*).

³⁹ Cf. Phil 4, 7.

⁴⁰ In the margin: *Words that are very provoking towards the love of God*

⁴¹ In the margin: *Fifteen characteristics of Man's perfect love for God: St. Bonaventure in Stimolo di amore and The Journey of the Soul into God, his works on Mystical Theology and other works. Verucchino treats the fifteen characteristics of loving God in a similar fashion. (cf. above nn. 4928s, 4995s) which are probably the source of Cornelio da Urbano, since Verucchino had already published his book Compendio di cento meditazioni in 1592 which is the year before the work translated here. This passage is taken from ch. 5 of Part 1.*

could ever be so strong as to pull us apart or destroy such sincere and pure charity. I should love with dynamic love so that I may be prepared to do anything and willingly carry out whatever you ask of me because you are my only love. Next I should love you fervently so that my heart feels sad about base, vile and transitory things and is raised exclusively to what is exalted following what St Paul said: “my conversation is in heaven.”⁴²

Furthermore my love ought to be forceful and make me continually explode into warm sighs of the desire to enjoy you. My love should be unique so that my love of you means more than the love of all the other things that I love put together since you, my Lord, have said: “Whoever loves father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.”⁴³ My love should be tireless so that it never ceases to grow as St Benedict said: “The measure of loving you, Lord, is to love you without measure.”⁴⁴ I should love you ravenously so that I may never be satisfied with it or be contented to be apart from your love. I should rather feel disturbed at not loving you in a lively, fervent manner. I ought to love you totally so as to dedicate all that I have and all that I am, all that I desire and all that I value to you. My love should be penetrating so that it reaches into my innermost self. I should be made soft by your love so that my heart becomes tender. My love should be inebriated by the breath of the Holy Spirit so that I might seek nothing but you and your wounds.

My love ought to be painless since a zealous desire for your pleasures should banish all bitterness and change it into the sweetness of the Spirit by means of which you will cheer me and indeed make me wish to endure injuries and crosses. My love should bring about union so that I am united with you and wish to be joined to you indissolubly saying: “I live, now not I but Christ who lives in me.”⁴⁵ Finally love should transform me just as iron is transformed by heat in a fire so I ought to be transformed by becoming like you and through you may in a certain sense become deified on earth and completely yours and you become totally united with me. Thus by means of grace I will become yours completely in this life and also in the next.

2. Concerning the great sadness which the sorrowful Jesus experienced concerning his Mother and how she felt about him. [Part 111, Preamble]

5025. Our sweet and afflicted Jesus said; you have filled me with bitterness.⁴⁶ He said this while he was hanging on the hard wood and saw his patient, afflicted sorrowful mother, whom he loved more than any other creature., He said this because of the vehemence of what she was suffering as she stood almost dumfounded, with a tense mind and glazed eyes as she looked in one direction and then in another at his wounded and lacerated body. Feeling immense sorrow for her affliction and for the knife (which was her compassion for what he was suffering) that pierced her heart because she too was also oppressed with bitterness,⁴⁷ as she contemplated her sweet Son, enduring such pain and surrounded by so much suffering including the pain of death.

They looked at one another, each one alone, both feeling most distressed. If one said to the other “you have filled me with bitterness”, the other might readily have

⁴² Cf. Phil 3, 20.

⁴³ Mt 10, 37.

⁴⁴ Cf. above note 34.

⁴⁵ Cf. Gal 2, 20.

⁴⁶ Cf. Lam 3, 16.

⁴⁷ Cf. Lam 1, 4

replied: “I too am greatly oppressed with bitterness”. Although they spoke to one another within their afflicted hearts and replied exteriorly by means of the tears in their eyes, neither of them could ease the grief of the other. Thus both of them suffered great affliction while the Son sacrificed his body on the cross, the Mother sacrificed her own soul on the altar of her virginal breast. We shall consider this and explore the sorrows of both of them more fully in the third part.

In the meantime I suggest that while sharing what they felt you ought to pray that they unite you to their suffering so that as you accompany them in what they are suffering you may also join in their consolations and experience peace and share in eternal glory.

3. Concerning the excessive distress and incredible suffering that the Virgin Mary suffered on Mount Calvary during the Passion and death of her beloved Son and how her martyrdom was longer and nobler than the martyrdom of any other martyr. [Part 111, cap. 4]

5026 At present it is impossible to tell of the very great afflictions and confusion, the very intense and severe sorrows, excessive anguish and indescribable bitterness that the mother Jesus the Redeemer endured. Therefore, to be brief, I shall pass over them in silence. Nevertheless I cannot fail in any way (out of love and devotion for her) to remind you and beg of you, faithful soul, from the bottom of my heart, that you at least desire to consider carefully, with a devout and compassionate heart, the words of John the Evangelist: “there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother.”⁴⁸

Not only was she standing near the cross gazing with compassionate eyes on her Son’s wounds, the immense anguish of his soul, and the great rivers of sacred blood falling to earth and watching his entire body from head to foot as it hung, but she was standing on her feet. What strength of heart! What marvellous steadfastness!⁴⁹ The earth shook, the ground trembled, the pillars of heaven quaked but the virginal limbs stood firm on the spot. Rocks split, and the mother’s heart remained intact. Her heart was a sea of bitterness and the waves of this sea rose up to heaven. However the sailor remained steady and very carefully kept a hand on the rudder so that such fury was unable to sink the ship or frustrate God’s will.

5027 However, such unity of will could not prevent the overwhelming sorrow in her heart when her eyes saw what her most beloved Son suffered. This is what St Bernard⁵⁰ said: “O most sweet Mother. what breast could be so iron-clad, what heart could be so hard as not to be moved with compassion, when faced with the tears and sorrows that you endured at the foot of the cross when you saw your beloved Son suffer so much, such extensive and shameful torment? What heart could understand, what tongue express your sorrow, your sobs, your sighs, and the torment of your heart, when, standing there, you saw your beloved Son so ill-treated and you could be of no help to him? ⁵¹ Did you see him stripped and could not cover him? Did you see him thirsty and could not give him a drink? Did you see him abused and could not defend him? Did you see him defamed as a malefactor and could not respond on his behalf? Did you see him spat upon and you could not wipe it off? Finally, did you see his eyes shed tears and you could not wipe them or gather the final sigh from his most

⁴⁸ Jn 19, 25. In the margin: *Pious exhortation to carefully consider St John’s words.*

⁴⁹ In the margin: *The extreme steadfastness of the Virgin Mary.*

⁵⁰ See note 52. In the margin: *We ought to feel compassion at the sorrow of the Blessed Virgin.*

⁵¹ In the margin: *How great perhaps was the sorrow and grief of the Virgin!*

holy breast or collect his clothes which you knew and loved so much or embrace him as he died? At that time you clearly remembered the prophecy that the holy old man had uttered before he died when he said that a sword would pierce your heart.” This is what St Bernard said.⁵²

After due consideration, but treating it as a mystery, he said that the Virgin stood on her feet and was not seated.⁵³ Bernard said concerning this passage: “with dignified words the Evangelist described the very great affliction that the Virgin suffered while standing at the cross because her precious Son was so constrained by his sentence and surrounded by rogues that she was hardly able to look on let alone be seated.⁵⁴

5028 What a wretched day and unhappy hour was it when the disconsolate virgin saw where her feet were taking her and what her hands were touching when she blessed him with her lips, gazed on him with her eyes and felt compassion in her heart! When the heart had been aroused, her body was unwilling to be seated and wanted to stand erect, especially because of the confined space, so that she could touch her Son. Would this not rather be a time to weep than to be seated? How could a person whose heart was crucified to the wood be seated?⁵⁵ How could the Virgin lie on the ground? Even if she had a hundred eyes, a hundred feet, a hundred hands, a hundred ears, a hundred hearts they would have all been looking for her Son, to gaze on him, to listen to him, to love and serve him. Whoever would have been with you at that lamentable hour would have been standing not seated, close to the cross, not far away, gazing with eyes filled with tears, kissing your feet with their lips and catching the drops of blood that were falling on your head.

Scripture is not merely satisfied to say that the Virgin stood near the cross, but that she stood by the cross of Jesus in order to distinguish Christ’s cross from those of the thieves. She had to be close to Christ and not the other crosses. Thus as we approach the cross we should do nothing but suffer injury, hear blasphemies, agree to be nailed, regard ourselves as being crucified, allow ourselves to be wounded and not resist death.⁵⁶ Whoever sits near the crosses of the thieves sits there seeking a fight, wanting to be greedy, and deceitful, anxious to eat, lustful and adulterous, untruthful and anxious to joke.

There was one cross where Christ’s family stood. There are many crosses where the devil’s ministers stand. This is to inform us that those who go to hell have more crosses than those who go to heaven. It is up to you to choose to go to heaven standing on foot while crying, or to go to hell seated while laughing.⁵⁷

5029 O my soul, O my heart, how can you not melt and die in this situation when you see the drops of blood that fall on the Mother and the mother’s sighs that rise up to the Son? My soul, can you not see how the sorrowful mother is bathed in the blood that flows from the body of her Son and how the earth is bathed in the tears that fall from the eyes of the mother?

The Seraphic Doctor St Bonaventure said: “Look, my soul, look and see how the Mother hangs on the cross. She stands on her feet and her Son is raised up on high

⁵² Cf. St Bernard, *Sermo dominicae infra octavam Assumptionis B. V. M.*, n. 14 (PL 183, 457s).

⁵³ Cf. Jn 19, 25.

⁵⁴ In the margin: *It is something of a mystery how the Virgin stood at the cross.*

⁵⁵ In the margin: *The Virgin Mary placed her heart on the cross.*

⁵⁶ In the margin: *When we approach the cross we ought to live on the cross in this manner.*

⁵⁷ In the margin: *How those who go to hell endure more crosses than those who go to heaven.*

while they both remain silent, and, what is more, they gaze at each other with their eyes and understand each other in their hearts. I beg of you, my fingers and pens, to stop writing for a while so that my soul may be better occupied in contemplating how Mary saw your Son shedding drops of blood and how her Son saw his mother weeping tears from her heart because her eyes were sorrowful and her heart afflicted.⁵⁸

Who can write without sighing? Who can read without sobbing? Was Mary's heart not filled with sorrow over what she saw and her Son's heart filled with love for what he saw? How much sheer conflict was there between the Son's love and the mother's suffering,⁵⁹ since death brought about the suffering, and love motivated the death, sorry brought on affliction, love gave strength/ at the end. It was love of the Son that sustained the mother's grief.

The Mother of Jesus stood beneath his cross and fainted with grief and languished with tears. Who could describe with either words or pen the great hurt both of them suffered, one seeing and suffering the other who was dying? The presence of one increased the suffering of the other just as mirrors reflect images to whoever is looking. Even though you have found much to admire never cease to investigate the motives and the reasons for the Passion, and if you do not discover anything else it will suffice to remember that she was a mother and according to any law a mother feels what her son experiences and thus she suffered the utmost suffering as he was crucified and tormented

5030 St Bonaventure, St Anselm and Ubertino⁶⁰ cannot stop wondering why her Son wanted to have his mother at the foot of the cross since she could not be of assistance in preventing his death and he did not need her to achieve our redemption⁶¹. It is not credible that he would do this without having a reason, nor would she go without having a spiritual purpose, for what transpired between the Son and his mother should be assessed as deeply spiritual as is the case with the content of Solomon's Song of Songs. Jesus wished that his mother be with him at that moment in order to bestow a unique bequest on her as she was his closest relative. St Anselm had this to say.⁶²

“O my fingers, O my heart, how could you have the strength to write, or how could your tongue have the ability to say that Christ left a bequest? What could his mother inherit from a person who was born in Bethlehem amongst animals, and died on Mount Calvary among thieves, who had been made responsible for his burial and who had to bury him in a grave that belonged to another person? What could a person who had lost one of his two garments to rogues who had crucified him and the other to the troops who guarded him leave in his will? What could he who never owned his own chair to sit on leave, or a pillow on which to lay his head? Thus the inheritance which she inherited from her Son was the blood that was shed and the sorrow that was endured for all when the blood which flowed down from the cross bathed her body, when she endured the pain of martyrdom of soul.”

⁵⁸ Cf. St Bonaventure, *Vita mystica*, c. 9; *Lignum vitae*, n. 28 (*Op. omnia* VIII, 174s, 786).

⁵⁹ In the margin: *Conflict between the Son's love and the mother's suffering*.

⁶⁰ Cf. *Beatae Mariae et Anselmi de passione Domini*, in the works of St Anselm (*PL* 159, 271-290). Ubertino da Casale, *Arbor vitae crucifixae Iesu*, especially XV: *Iesus matri compatiens* (Venetius, per Andream de Bonetius de Papia, anno 1485, t. X-XIII).

⁶¹ In the margin: *This is the only reason why Christ led his mother at the foot of the cross*

⁶² Cf. above note 60.

5031 Concerning the Lord's Passion Bernadine⁶³ said: "When Christ found himself experiencing so much going on around him and that he was at a very tense moment, he appropriately came across Mary sharing everything with him not only because she wanted to feel compassion for him but because she wished to share in what he suffered."

St Augustine said:⁶⁴ "Because the great Simeon's prophecy had not been fulfilled, it was the permission and counsel of the Holy Spirit that the sorrowful Mother should find herself on Mount Calvary where the sword of sorrow took her Son's life and pierced his Mother's heart." Saint Anselm⁶⁵ said: "Because it was unreasonable that the Mother of God remain without the halo of martyrdom and also as it was appropriate that it was placed in her hand by tyrants, she took the middle road, along which, as she had served her Son with overwhelming love, her own Son would bring about her masterdom by means of his suffering.

Whoever saw or heard of such as thing as rogues martyring the Son at the same time as the Son martyred his Mother?"

St Bernard said:⁶⁶ "O my good Jesus how much greater is the love that you show than the love that I deserve, O Redeemer of my soul, since on Mount Calvary on the Friday of your cross, you did not only offer your own soul, but also that of your mother! You gave yourself and your mother to us when the sword of the Passion took your life and pierced her soul!"

5032 Therefore, O most merciful Virgin and Lady why did you voluntarily increase your sorrow by gazing on your Son? Why did you come to this place?⁶⁷ Appearing in public places did not conform to your solitary lifestyle. It is not in a mother's heart to see her Son die no matter how much she loved him and wanted to be at his bedside, and yet you came to see your Son die between two thieves on a cross because of a sentence. Given that you were determined to overcome a mother's heart and pay honour to the mystery of the cross, why did you attach so much value to taking the purple cloak to continually remind you of your sorrow? You could not offer any remedy, indeed by your presence you increased his torment. It only meant that you increased his sorry when at the end of his agony and at his passing on and struggle with death, with his final breaths racking his tormented chest, casting his bloodshot and afflicted eyes down he saw you at the foot of the cross. As his senses were weak at the end of his life, and his eyes were dim in the shadow of death he could not have recognised you far away. You stood nearby so he could recognise you clearly and distinctly and see the arms, which were very worn, that carried him to Egypt, and the virginal breast (the milk of which had fed him) which was now become an ocean of sorrow.

Behold holy Angels, these two figures, if by chance you are able to recognise them. Behold, heavens, this cruelty and make your sorrow evident. Drape yourself in horror over the death of your Lord. Let the clear air become dim because so that the world may not see the naked flesh of your Creator! With your darkness stretch a mantle over his body, so that profane eyes may not see that the Arc of the Covenant is

⁶³ Cf. St Bernardine, *Quadragesimale de Evangelio aeterno*, sermo 56, art. II/1, cap.1) *Op. omnia* V, 76).

⁶⁴ In the margin: *The reasons why the mother of Jesus found herself at the cross.*

⁶⁵ Cf. note 60.

⁶⁶ In the margin: *St Bernard is referring to the words of Cain: "My sin is too great for me to merit forgiveness."* Cf. note 52.

⁶⁷ In the margin: *Arguing with the Virgin about her presence at the foot of the cross.*

naked. O heavens, that were created to be so peaceful, O earth clothed with such variety and beauty, if you cloud your glory during this suffering, if you are not endowed with senses, can you feel what the Mother's heart and virginal breast is feeling?

5033 Thus it was that the devout and distinguished doctor St Augustine experienced the greatest compassion and pity for the acutely afflicted and sorrowful Virgin. He said: "O holy Mother, daughter and she who nurtured the Lord, I want to contemplate the extent of such sorrow. You witnessed the crucifixion of your only Son. You made the master a pupil, the Lord a disciple. Truly a sword of sorrow pierced your heart, the lance punctured your heart, and the nails penetrated your innermost being, the vision of your crucified Son shook your spirit. You lost your strength, your tongue went silent, your eyes became dry and the bloom of your beauty turned pale. Your Son's wounds were your wounds, his cross was your cross and his death was your death. Tell me, Mother, where did you leave your Son? Son where did you leave your Mother? You who provided nurture how could you abandon the one that you had fed? How much more willingly would you have forfeited your life than lose his sweet companionship? You are more a martyr than a mother because you sacrifice more than life. On that day, my soul, you witnessed two martyrs: one in the body of Jesus and the other in the heart of the Virgin, Christ's flesh was sacrificed in the first, Mary's soul in the second/ O Virgin whose equal has never been born! O disconsolate Mother, did you not recognise how your Son wanted to give his soul to the Father?"⁶⁸

Concerning the Virgin's heartbroken state St Bernard said:⁶⁹ "O unhappiness which has never been seen since then! O cruelty that has never been experienced since then like it was on Mount Calvary! Despising his Mother, the rogues were dividing his garments among themselves at the foot of the cross and in the presence of Christ. What upset her most was that they tore up her Son's garments to share them and that split her Mother's heart."⁷⁰ Believe me, my soul that if the Son's garments were divided into four parts, the most sorrowful mother's heart was divided into more than a thousand parts. His Mother saw that her Son's life was ending and bending his divine head towards her he presented his body to her and asking permission he expired, saying: "it is finished."⁷¹

3034 Then being unable to speak anymore she fell at the foot of the cross as if dead.⁷² When she saw that her Son had died, she felt so much sorrow that she wished that she had died too. She fell in a faint clinging to the cross and while she was like this Longinus came and pierced the Lord's side with a lance and the water that fell from there splashed on the Virgin's face and as she came to herself she became alarmed and frightened at what had taken place. When she saw her Son's side open she said:⁷³ "O Son of my grief, how could I have appreciated that what you said when you surrendered your soul to your Father was in reference to the end of your suffering and passion as it could not have been referring to my struggle since with your death that would begin again because when your life ended I could not go on living. With you

⁶⁸In the margin: St Augustine's words concerning the sorrowful Virgin.

⁶⁹ From the works of St Bernard, cf. *Liber de passionibus Christi et doloribus et planctibus matris eius*. (PL) 182, 1135-38).

⁷⁰ In the margin: *Shedding of Christ's garments*.

⁷¹ Cf. Jn 19, 30.

⁷² In the margin: *The Mother's collapse at the foot of the cross*.

⁷³ In the margin: *The Virgin's words to her Son. Note the dramatization*.

my candle was extinguished and my crown shattered, all that I thought was good came to an end with you and all my worries began again. However, I was happy to see that your troubles had ended. Now I can see that this was not the case as your enemies did not forgive you even though you were dead.⁷⁴ They persecuted you as far as the wood of the cross with many insults and would not stop.” They did this to torment you with more sorrow, dishonouring and persecuting your body, being still afraid of you after you were dead, because the wound in Christ’s side only affected the sorrowful heart of the Virgin.⁷⁵ However, Mary’s soul was in her Son’s body more than in her own body because of love and now her heart was lifted up on the cross with Christ, even though after she had fallen her body was at the foot of the cross.

3035 This is why a doctor who was devoted to the Virgin could comment on the verse of the Gospel which states: His Mother stood by the cross of Jesus:⁷⁶ “O Evangelist, you have said little in stating that the Mother of Jesus stood by the cross because I strongly believe that her heart was up on the cross with her Son. Thus, if those who opened Christ’s side had looked at that of his Mother they would have found that her side had been cut just as the name of Jesus was found in St Ignatius’ heart because of his great love, and all the instruments of Christ’s Passion were found impressed on the heart of Blessed Clare of Monte Falco.⁷⁷ In order to show us that the Virgin was raised up and raised onto the cross with her Son, The Holy Spirit said on her behalf. “I shall go up to the palm tree and take hold of its fruit.⁷⁸ She went up the palm tree (which is the cross) and took its fruit. We recognise so easily that this belonged to us and had been stolen from us. When the Virgin saw that this was the fruit of her womb that hung on the wood of the cross she ardently wanted to climb up and pick the fruit. She used all her strength to do this since she clearly knew that tis fruit belonged to her”

Thus St Bernard⁷⁹ said: “This is how the sword really pierced your soul at the moment when the cruel lance opened your dead Son’s side. It is certain that his soul was no longer present, but your soul had certainly not been taken away and thus it is that we are telling the truth when we preach that you endured more than martyrdom in that your experience of compassion went further than physical suffering.⁸⁰ The martyrdom of this holy Virgin was nobler than that of all the other martyrs and was worthy of a halo because she suffered in her soul for love of Christ the martyr.⁸¹

Thus St Jerome⁸² said: “The other Saints suffered for Christ in the flesh. When the blessed Virgin endured her sufferings could not be hurt in her body which was immortal. It was in her soul that she was hurt. Therefore I believe that she was more than a martyr since she suffered more severely when she felt the sword of Christ’s passion pierce her soul. The martyrdom of the sorrowful Mother was in her heart when she saw her dearly beloved die. She experienced martyrdom in her eyes when she saw the wounds, martyrdom in her ears when she heard the blasphemies and in her body because of feeling such anxiety.”

⁷⁴ In the margin: *Christ was not only persecuted up to the time of his death but even later.*

⁷⁵ In the margin: *Christ was perused not only to the point of death but afterwards as well.*

⁷⁶ In the margin: *Christ was wounded in his side, Mary in her heart.*

⁷⁷ In the margin: *Miracles in the hearts of St Ignatius and St Clare of Monte Falco. cf. E. Menestò, il processo di canonizzazione di Chiara da Montefalco, Ferenze- Perugia 1984.*

⁷⁸ Cf. Song 7, 8 (*Vulg.*).

⁷⁹ Cf. above note 52.

⁸⁰ In the margin: *Mary was more than a martyr.*

⁸¹ In the margin: *The Virgin’s martyrdom was noble than that of all of the others.*

⁸² This was probably said by St Bernard. Cf. note 52.

5036 Tell me, I beg of you, who is the greatest martyr, the one who suffers for a day or the one who suffers for a lifetime? From the moment that the grief-stricken mother lost her Son until she laid him in the grave she endured nothing but a long martyrdom⁸³ because in addition to the fact that they had killed him, she was upset at seeing that they had deliberately killed him, and after he had died she shed tears over having watched him die. O how great and inestimable was the grief of this sorrowful mother felt for her heart had been broken into as many pieces as the pieces broken from the heart of her beloved Son.⁸⁴ One piece of her heart lay on the ground in the blood, another with the skin that had fallen off the cross, another with his body in the grave, another in the limbo of her soul, and another on Mount Calvary with her family who were in tears.

O my soul, what do you want me to say except that her Son's heart had been broken into many pieces and the mother's heart had been broken into many more. Concerning this Ubertino⁸⁵ said: "The sorrowful mother had more pieces in her afflicted heart because loving her precious Son more than she loved herself she had only a small space remaining in her heart." St Bernard⁸⁶ said: "Princess of the Angels, O heart broken Mother, did such a Son have a mother such as you? What Son ever had such a Son as you had, since you remained a virgin while conceiving him, brought him forth with contentment, nourished him with milk, followed him care, and buried him with tears? What more could you have done than follow him with great resolve and bury him with relentless tears? What more could he have done for you, since he chose you as his mother and redeemed you by his blood? To whom, if not you, O mother, should we turn for the grace of consolation and the sorrow over your passion?"

O glorious soul, O fortunate heart that you are, O Queen of heaven, why were you not martyred by Nero's knife, as was St Paul, but rather by the very knife that killed your Son? Love united you at the Incarnation; sorrow separated you at his passion.

4. An offering of great value and devotion to be given to Christ our Lord
[Part III, cap. 5]

5037 Since amongst all the exercises and devotions that could be offered to Our Lord Jesus Christ, O my dear soul, the one that is more pleasing to him and fruitful to people is meditation of his passion and death. This still pleases him and he is really pleased by our remembrance and veneration of his most merciful and sweet Mother.⁸⁷ Therefore after acknowledging his sufferings, offer him the compassion and sorrow of his dear and delightful mother, so that by doing what follows, for your sins and the sins of the whole world and to obtain God's love, you should say this:⁸⁸

"Most kind Lord, my Jesus, who were nailed to the cross because of your most ardent love for us, receive now, I beg of you, the suffering of all of your wounds, and all the precious blood that you shed. Also receive the compassion and suffering of

⁸³ In the margin: *How great was the mother's martyrdom.*

⁸⁴ In the margin: *The Virgin's heart was broken into many pieces.*

⁸⁵ Cf. above note 60.

⁸⁶ Cf. St Bernard, *Sermo II de adventu Domini; Hom. I super Missus est n. 5.9. (PL 183, 42s, 58-61).*

⁸⁷ In the margin: *An exercise and devotion that is most pleasing to Our Lord Jesus Christ is remembering his passion.*

⁸⁸ In the margin: *Offering to be made to Christ Our Lord.*

your most long-suffering Mother for my sins and those of the whole world. Accept me, an unworthy sinner, as I offer myself to you in union with the suffering of your most sweet mother and in union with your immense charity and draw me completely to giving you praise and glory according to your sublime and supreme will.

O most kind and gentle Jesus, for myself and for the whole world I offer you the suffering of your holy and compassionate mother, who when she saw you naked on the cross, poor, humiliated and despised, placed among thieves, begged of you that out of your mercy you would grant that your passion and the compassion of your merciful and holy mother would be so impressed upon my heart that I would see it through her eyes and feel like she did for all that I see happened to you and was what you endured in your passion.

5038 After this I offer you the suffering which you endured when I saw you spat upon, bleeding and completely devastated with nothing beautiful about you, with no decency whereas beforehand you had been most beautiful and good looking to me and to the whole world. As before I once again implore you to grant me true and perfect poverty of spirit by means of which I may despise and leave aside myself and everything outside me, and out of love of you put aside all creatures and love none but you, because of you and in the way you want.

Once again, O my Lord, I offer you the further suffering that you endured when I saw you exposed to all the pain that you endured in your limbs as they were wounded and lacerated and you were abandoned without any help or consolation. Once again I beg of you and ask that you grant me true humility and meekness, strength and constancy of spirit, so that in every adversity and temptation I may turn to you alone and place all my thought, hope and confidence in you alone.

After this I offer you your other sorrow when I saw that you were suffering from bitter thirst and said: *I thirst*,⁸⁹ and there was no one to give you even a drop of water. As above I beg of you to extinguish all desire for and pleasure from cravings so that I may be ardently zealous and long for your honour and glory, for doing your will and for the salvation of souls.

Finally I offer you, O sweet, loving Jesus, the sorrow of your Blessed Mother, which struck her when she saw you die on the cross, and I beg of you again as I did before that you would grant me and all creatures to die to the world, to vice, to all concupiscence, to live only for you, so that you may live in me and possess me totally and make my heart be devoured and burn with your divine love.

5. [*The spiritual love of compassion was greater in Christ than the physical love of the passion.*] (Part IV, cap. 2)

5039 You know, my dear, that the compassionate sorrow which Christ suffered was greater than the physical pain he suffered in his Passion because everything which was spiritual was more perfect in his nature than what was correspondingly psychical⁹⁰ His spiritual sight was more perfect than his physical sight, His spiritual hearing was more perfect than his physical hearing, His spiritual joy was more perfect than his physical joy, and so his spiritual suffering was more intense than his physical suffering. By saying that it was more perfect, we mean that it upset him more and caused him more anxiety and pain. While a human person is living this mortal life, as

⁸⁹ Jn 19, 28.

⁹⁰ In the margin, *Whatever is spiritual is more perfect than what is physical*

soon as he experiences pain that is purely spiritual,⁹¹ because of the link of body and soul, when the soul experiences any suffering some of it immediately passes on to the body and certain reactions which do not originate in the body take place and cause effects in the senses that provoke a response. Happiness is immediately lost together with exterior laughter and sometimes the appetite for food and tears begin to fall, sighing starts and the face wrinkles. On the other hand when the body experiences some pain the soul immediately shares in part of it. Therefore, it loses much of its proficiency and happy disposition to spiritual matters and can think of nothing but bodily suffering.

Although this is how things are, all things being equal, the suffering will be greater and cause more distress if it is basically rooted in the mind and has its principle root and cause there, as we can see in those people who suffer from obsession and mental exhaustion and other more serious conditions when they cut their wrist. As the compassion that Christ carried in his heart was growing, it followed that it was greater than the sufferings in his body.⁹² Such compassion became more exhausting and painful the longer it lasted. Perhaps Job has demonstrated how long it lasted, when he said speaking in the person of the Lord: “For from my infancy mercy grew up with me, and it came out with me from my mother’s womb.”⁹³ From when he was a child his pierced heart had compassion for those whom he saw suffering. Compassion grew as part of him like the clothes his mother made him. It says that it came out with him from his mother’s womb to have us understand that he was compassionate by nature, since women are more compassionate than men and share with greater tenderness,⁹⁴ and seeing that Christ was the only son of a lone mother it follows that he was naturally more compassionate and tender than any man as he was the only child of the most merciful mother in the world.

5040 Natural and premeditated compassion came to him from his mother’s womb and continued to grow each day as the opportunity increased for him. There is no one who has more compassion than one who has wide experience and who knows, from his own experience, what someone else is suffering. As a consequence he understands what others suffer. In order to have compassion the Lord wished to learn by suffering every kind of anxiety. Thus the Apostle said: “For we have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities or worries, but one tempted in all things as we are without sinning. Following this the same Apostle said: “from what Christ suffered he learnt obedience”.⁹⁵ Thus he says that he learnt to have compassion for us from his struggles, and so as he did not resist coming from his mother’s womb, once he had left the virginal womb he did not stop growing in compassion.

Thus suffering and compassion grew. The suffering was exterior and interior until he was raised on the cross as onto a kingly throne of suffering and compassion. Here he became the complete and most precious, master of all kinds of suffering. As we have said his compassion grew with him. This happened in life and not just in his emotions, by means of experience and not just in theory and thus we can say for certain and maintain that no one had greater compassion than he did for no one suffered as much as he did personally. Christ suffered exceptionally and frightfully and to a greater extent than the suffering of all mankind as David had indicated when

⁹¹ In the margin: *We cannot experience spiritual suffering on its own in this life.*

⁹² In the margin: *Christ suffered more internally than externally.*

⁹³ Cf. Job 31, 18 (*Vulg.*).

⁹⁴ In the margin: *Women are more compassionate.*

⁹⁵ Cf. Heb, 4, 15; 5, 8.

he said: “The sorrows of death surrounded me on every side and the torments of hell”⁹⁶ St Thomas said: “That apart from the sufferings of the next life, including those of hell and purgatory, the sufferings of Christ that were undergone in the world at that time and in future.”⁹⁷

5041 Now consider how great Christ’s sufferings were as they continued to cause him to suffer breaking his heart in a martyrdom that was more cruel even than death. O faithful soul, how could you be so cruel and inhuman as not to be moved with compassion and love for your dear Lord and kind Saviour when he showed such great and inestimable compassion towards you and underwent such great pain, bitter torment, and such a cruel and shameful death out of love for you? I tell you for certain that I am of the same opinion as St Augustine and advise you together with Remigio, and Origin to weep over your own sins before weeping over Christ’s Passion.

Thus St Augustine said: “Since, when the Son of God said (to the daughters of Sion) ‘weep over yourselves’⁹⁸ you were dispensed from crying for him, I would be of the opinion you should weep over your faults and then weep over his wounds, since it makes the Redeemer more happy when he sees that your soul has been freed from faults than seeing your eyes filled with tears.”⁹⁹

Remigio said: “How important is the sentence that God uttered: Do not weep over me, because had he been going to death on account of himself, it would appear to be correct to cry over him; but because he was not dying for his own sins, but for my sins why would I rather not be crying about that?”¹⁰⁰ Origin said: “Christ is happier when you cry for our own sins than when you sigh over his torments.”¹⁰¹

5042 My soul, if you wish to be sorry for and to weep over your own sins and to weep over the Passion later, this will help towards your salvation and not your damnation.¹⁰² Go before your loving Jesus with a contrite heart and being humble pray with great confidence and hope,¹⁰³

“I implore you, my most merciful Redeemer, to grant me the grace to cry in the first place over my many sins and later over your bitter Passion, to be forgiving and merciful towards my neighbour and to love him with a pure and sincere heart. In the first place let me, for love of you and with a generous heart, forgive all the offences that he has committed against me and then to love him with a pure and sincere heart to fulfil your most sacred commandment and not for my self-interest and advantage. In doing this may I follow the ineffable charity and humility with which you bent down to take all my wickedness on yourself, so that you would not only free me from sin but make me share in your goodness, as you took away my death and gave me your life, because you took my sins upon yourself and gave me grace. Since, my Redeemer, all your torments are treasures and nails of adornment, your sufferings take me into your embrace, your bitter suffering sustains me, your wounds heal me,

⁹⁶ Cf. Ps 17, 5-6 (*Vlug.*).

⁹⁷ S. Th. III. In the margin: *The sufferings of Christ were the greatest in the world.*

⁹⁸ Cf. Lk 23, 28.

⁹⁹ In the margin: *We ought to cry more for our sins than for Christ’s passion.* The quotation is hard to identify in St Augustine. In general see *Sermo 31, in ps. 123* (PL 38, 192-196).

¹⁰⁰ This quote could not be found in PL [3] where some of the works of Remigio d’Auxette are collected.

¹⁰¹ The quote cannot be identified. Cf. however Origenes, *In Jeremiam ho. 19* (PG 13, 514).

¹⁰² In the margin: *What we ought to do to weep over our sins.*

¹⁰³ In the margin: *Prayer to Christ that is full of devotion, compunction, and which stirs love for him.*

your blood enriches me and your love inebriates me¹⁰⁴ warm me with the purple garment of charity, comfort me when the purple garment means abuse and with enthusiasm for my welfare take the rod in hand, and in sympathy for what I may lose, wear the crown of confusion. In order to lead me back and prepare me for real penance make it easy and support all bitterness and weakness with love and patience. You volunteered to carry the heavy, bitter cross upon your delicate and wounded shoulders and in order to wound and pierce my heart with love and charity; you allowed your sacred hands and feet to be pierced with rough nails. To give my soul a happy and blessed life you died a shameful and cruel death. To open the gate of paradise for me you allowed your holy side to be opened, and to gather me into the glory of the blessed you let your sacred body remain for three days in the grave.

O kind Saviour, do not stop presenting yourself before the eyes of your Eternal Father on our behalf and since out of love you offered your limbs to atrocious sufferings and offered them to your Father, grant us, out of love, the grace to cry, firstly for our errors and then for your bitter Passion so that we may be forgiven and not forfeit the fruit of your Passion, but lead to heavenly glory.”

6. *A very strong encouragement to incite and strongly motivate the faithful soul to hate the vice of ingratitude.* (Part IV cap. 7 and 8).

5043 “I have carved you onto my hands,” our Saviour Jesus said through Isaiah¹⁰⁵ and this is the same as if he had said: “O Christian soul, you should never in any circumstances forget him who¹⁰⁶ in order to keep you in mind, wrote your name on his hand through which a sharp, rough nail had passed, squirting out an abundance of precious blood with infinite love as if it were an indescribable pen. Therefore it is most just that such a great gift is never far from your mind. But is carried in your heart forever, and that you give him thanks, showing how grateful you are”.

Look at King Ahasuerus¹⁰⁷ who, one night, was reading a book that he had commanded to be kept as a memorial of the incident of how Mordecai had saved him from death. How much more and with greater reason ought a Christian to remember such an exalted gift as being freed by Jesus Christ from the death of hell! The death from which Mordecai saved King Ahasuerus was not the death of his soul but of his body.¹⁰⁸ To preserve Ahasuerus’ life Mordecai gave nothing but his word, pointing out who was the traitor. With respect to us Christ surrendered his honour, his blood and his very life. Mordecai did not shed blood for Ahasuerus as Christ shed his blood. Therefore we ought to inscribe on our soul’s memory the wonderful fact that though we were condemned to death in hell, in his infinite goodness our Redeemer freed us and generously opened the gates of paradise through which we could never have entered unless he has shed his precious blood for us.

5044 We should also spend nights (like Ahasuerus) reading the book of our redemption to remind ourselves of the special grace and favour that we have received from the real Mordecai, Jesus Christ, by means of whose care and activity we were freed from death in hell. Thus the Prophet Jeremiah said: “Remember my poverty, the

¹⁰⁴ In the margin: *Christ’s sufferings are our riches.*

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Is 49, 16.

¹⁰⁶ *Di quello che* = he who.

¹⁰⁷ Esther 7.

¹⁰⁸ In the margin: *Comparison between Mordecai and Christ.*

transgression, the wormwood and the gall.”¹⁰⁹ This is as if to say: “O my dear soul, who I redeemed with such love and at such a great cost, I do not want you to forget or to cast from memory the gift of your redemption. Rather you ought to show that you are very grateful and praise and thank me because I hate ingratitude and pride and love it when thanked for grace, especially the grace of redemption.”

We can see with certainty how well the devout St Bernard¹¹⁰ recognised this especially as he put so much effort into contemplating the sacred mysteries of Christ’s Passion realizing the great profit and fruit that came from this. He said this himself to his religious brothers using the following words: “Brothers, from the beginning of my conversion, in place of the merits which I knew that I did not have, I considered all my Lord’s bitterness and continual struggle and held that in my heart, dwelling particularly on the want and poverty of the circumstances in the mystery of his Nativity,¹¹¹ then the difficulties during his preaching, the weariness of his travels, the nights in prayer, the labour of his fasting, the tears of compassion, the traps set by his enemies and especially the dangers that came about through false brothers, the accusations, the persecution, the injury from slaps, shame, scorn, flagellation, thorns, nails, and everything else that caused him pain. I regularly thought about these things as my rule of conduct.” He said a little further down: “Consequently, my brothers, (as you know) when I preach I always have these things on my lips, when I am thinking I always have them in my heart as God knows. It will always be my most exalted and inner perspective to come to know Jesus Christ Crucified,”¹¹²

5045 Since this glorious Saint was so dedicated and absorbed in divine contemplation which is clear from him having divine enlightenment, his spirit knew the immense love and burning charity that God had towards us, his ungrateful creatures, even though he had done such great and indefinable things for our salvation. Considering that the way the Lord wanted to provide for us was so precious and wonderful in that he subjected himself to such injuries, calumnies, blasphemies, scourging, thorns, and wounds and shameful death in order to provide us with a glorious and holy life, and, by us drinking from the chalice of the passion to give us to drink from the chalice of eternal delights, he immediately knew the depths of the infinite charity and goodness of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my soul, gaze with merciful emotion, devout heart and great gratitude of soul on the suffering of your sweet and loving Saviour. Consider what severe pain, burning sorrow and grave torment he suffered out of love, and how he was wounded over his whole body, lacerated and bathed in his blood and then say from the bottom of your heart:¹¹³ “O most beautiful of all men:”¹¹⁴ how did you become ugly and horrible because of our sins! I ate rotted eggs, Lord; your teeth were set on edge, because mine had become loose.¹¹⁵ You died for my sins, made sad by my faults¹¹⁶, gentle holocaust in the sight of the eternal Father in order to remit the just shame that belonged to me. What more could you have done, most sweet Jesus?¹¹⁷ From the soles of your feet to the top of your head you were immersed in the ocean of

¹⁰⁹ Lam. 3, 19.

¹¹⁰ In the margin: *Bernard contemplated Christ’s Passion extensively.*

¹¹¹ In the margin: *St Bernard’s contemplation of Christ’s Passion*

¹¹² Cf. St Bernard, *Sermo 43 in Cant.*, nn. 3-4 (PL 183, 994s).

¹¹³ In the margin: *Emotional prayer to Jesus Christ.*

¹¹⁴ Cf. Ps 44, 3 (*Vulg.*)

¹¹⁵ Cf. Ezekiel 18, 2; Jer. 31, 20-30.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Is 53, 5; 1 Pt 2, 24.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Is 5, 4.

passion, even to the abyss of the bitterest waters you have penetrated to the depths of the soul.¹¹⁸ You were willing to forfeit your soul to save mine which had been lost.” O what a debt is this that we owe Christ!¹¹⁹ Dear reader, what does Christ have to do with death, what does God have to do with sin? We deserve death, not salvation; salvation is dead where vice lives.

5046 We have sinned, not God. God paid with his life so that sinners might be absolved. Jeremiah¹²⁰ said that he gave his beloved soul into the hands of his enemies to show us the infinite love and burning charity that Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had for humankind. O deed without precedent! O grace without merit! O love beyond measure! My Lord, my God, all mine, you are not yourself but me! Yours is all the glory, praise, honour, life, beatitude! You know nothing of sin or punishment. If then, O dear reader, he appears to be full of sin, unworthy to live, the king of all sinners who ever were, are or will be, crowned with thorns, bound, mocked, placed on a cross, and killed and died so shamefully, amidst so much suffering, in such pain, does it not strike you that he is more like you than like himself?¹²¹ Those torments should have been ours and not his. He suffered as we should have suffered, not as he suffered as the sins were ours not his. He was killed for our sins. He bore our sins in his flesh on the cross.¹²² O what consummate love! O what infinite love! O what immeasurable perfection! O perfect plenitude of divine love and of his burning charity!

Nothing could have obliged God to undertake such an exceptional mission. No one is above God. No one is his equal. His actions are not bound by any law. He is totally just. His wish is in itself the rule for all that he does. However, if what he did was not required because of his power or his wisdom, it became necessary because of his love.¹²³ O sweet love, O gentle love, O strong love. It is sweet in that it is alluring, gentle in that it is persuasive, strong in that it draws us.¹²⁴

5047 At dawn when God gives them the gift of light and the sun spontaneously become happy and sings mankind should also become happy and thank God when it experiences and recognises the gifts which it receives from the Sun of Justice, Christ. Like animals there are many who eat the fruit that falls from the tree without ever thanking the tree from which it came. God does not reproach us so much for our sins, as he does for our ingratitude when we are unwilling to accept the grace that he confers and offers. God is not as shocked at us being sinners who are infirm and weak and that we fall because (as David said) he knows and realises we are made up of a filthy mass¹²⁵ but he loves us so much that he wishes to confer gifts and grace. When we are not willing to accept them, the wonder is not that mankind stumbles and falls, as mankind, but the wicked and strange thing is that when God holds his hand out to fallen mankind, to raise it up, and to lift it from its filth it does not want to be raised and lifted up.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Is 1, 6.

¹¹⁹ In the margin: *How great is the debt that we owe Christ?*

¹²⁰ Cf. Jer. 12, 7 (*Vulg.*)

¹²¹ In the margin: *Christ more like us than like himself.*

¹²² Cf. 1 Pet 2, 24.

¹²³ In the margin: *Necessary out of love.*

¹²⁴ The verse that follows is taken from part IV, cap. 8.

¹²⁵ Cf. Ps 144, 14 (*Vulg.*).

Leviticus commanded that the fat of the animal be offered¹²⁶ emphasising that he wanted glory and thanks for grace received to be offered for the many gifts that had been given. Since we receive more and greater gifts from God than other creatures receive, we ought to offer him more thanks and greater thanks according to what is written in the Second Book of Machabees that was addressed to the Jews: “Having been delivered out of great dangers, we give him great thanks.”¹²⁷ We should thank God that we continually receive gifts from him as the Apostle Paul said: “We give thanks to God always.”¹²⁸ The same Apostle said: to the Colossians “Let whatever you do be done in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and to the Father.”¹²⁹ He wrote to the Thessalonians: “In all things give thanks to God.”¹³⁰ Because of this all of our activities should end in giving thanks to God, just as all the Canonical Hours end saying *Deo gratias*.

5048 The activities of the blessed are to offer praise and thanks to God. So (according to Isaiah) in the heavenly city there is joy and thanksgiving and the sound of glorification and praise¹³¹ The happy spirits are always giving thanks to God in heaven as John the Evangelist said when he heard the gentle music from heaven that announced: “Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving, honour, and power and strength to our God forever and ever.”¹³² Therefore, those who want to go to glory should imitate the Saints who are there by giving thanks to God whose blessings they received. Down here on earth we should try our best to imitate the citizens of heaven and not the ungrateful people of Babylon who forget about God not recalling that these gifts come from him.

Giving thanks to God is nothing more than an interior act of the soul by means of which in recognising God for the good, infinite Lord that he is, from whom everything else comes, rejoices over what it has received, and gives all the glory to God, striving to make itself ready to receive these gifts and become more obliged to love and follow God.¹³³ The thanks that you offer to God is a sigh which he implants in the soul, by means of which your heart, which is on fire with divine love by means of the zeal which he stirs, comes to love him. On account of this when God chooses a person to become great, he changes their name, as he did with Abraham, Sarah, Jacob, and Peter so that these people, recalling their proper names, recall the gifts that they received from God.¹³⁴

5049 In the twelfth chapter of Exodus God only mentions gifts commanding the people to celebrate the Pasch and to eat the Lamb and that they perform many other ceremonies to commemorate that he had freed them from Egypt. Thus he said: “Remember the day on which I brought you out of Egypt”.¹³⁵ The Pasch was meant to be a perpetual memorial of the gifts that he had given them and so that they would not forget them quickly he wanted it last not for one day but for seven during which time

¹²⁶ Lv. 7, 3-5.

¹²⁷ Cf. 2 Mac. 1, 11.

¹²⁸ Cf. 1 Thes. 1, 2.

¹²⁹ Cf. Col. 3, 17.

¹³⁰ 1 Thes 5. 18.

¹³¹ Cf. Is 66, 10=14. In the margin: *Activities of the blessed and thanksgiving to God.*

¹³² Ap. 7, 12.

¹³³ In the margin: *Giving thanks to God without end.*

¹³⁴ In the margin: *God usually changes the name of someone whom he wants to make great.*

¹³⁵ Cf. Ex 12, 27; 13, 14. In the margin: *God wanted us to be grateful for his gifts.*

they would eat unleavened bread He wanted them to make an offering, since it was not sufficient that they simply remember God's gifts, but it is also necessary for us to give thanks by our actions and good works. He commanded that they offer a small amount of their first possessions. What they had received from God was immeasurable. What we offer to him is measured and a small amount. Then because he had fed and sustained them with manna from heaven in the desert, God commanded Moses to preserve a jar of manna and place it in the Arc of the Covenant as a perpetual memorial, so that their children and their descendants for all generations would always remember the great favour which they had received from God and know with what food he had fed and sustained their fathers in the desert.¹³⁶

5050 The Lord said to someone whom he had cured: "Tell the great things God has done to you."¹³⁷ Moses spoke about the good things that God had done to the people of Israel.¹³⁸ Do your best to find out who has helped you and done good things to you so that you can thank them, and do not worry about who has offended you in order to hate and have revenge. The Son of God brought this teaching down to earth from heaven.¹³⁹ When Christ was struck in the house of Caiaphas, according to what the Apostle said,¹⁴⁰ our Saviour knew very well who had hit him, but he wanted to be treated like that to teach us not to be concerned about knowing who has offended, hit or hurt us. Indeed we ought to cover our eyes so that we do not see or recognise our persecutors and those who offend us. If we are offended, cursed and badly treated let us blindfold our eyes and not seek to know who our enemies are nor what their names are.¹⁴¹

God said to Abraham that his descendants would be servants and that they would be persecuted in a foreign land but did not wish to explain what kind of persecutors the Egyptians would be so that they would not hate them for being like that.¹⁴² On the other hand we should feel obliged to discover the name of whoever does something good to us so that we may show our appreciation. When Jesus had worked the miracle, the ruler thanked him profoundly and he and his whole household came to believe.¹⁴³ As worldlings try to know the names of their enemies to hate them and to recall the reasons why they ought to hate them and have revenge, so too good people ought to remember the gifts that they have received and all the reasons this gives them for doing good. Scripture says that God remembered the pact he had made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and so decided to free their children from the tyranny of Pharaoh. In order to do what was good for the people of Israel he recalled the good things that their fathers had done and the service which they had rendered to him.¹⁴⁴

Christian soul, you too must remember the great and innumerable gifts which God has given you and continually offer him thanks for them. If we thank God for the benefits received, we ourselves become worthy to receive other gifts once again and to have more access to his divine love forever. Give thanks to God for the time he has given you to do penance by means of which you have merited to have your sins removed.

¹³⁶ Cf. Ex 16, 33.

¹³⁷ Cf. Lk 8, 39.

¹³⁸ Cf. Ex 18, 8.

¹³⁹ In the margin: *A teaching which Christ brought to earth from heaven.*

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Lk 22, 64

¹⁴¹ In the margin: *We ought to take no notice of those who offend us, think well of those who help us.*

¹⁴² Cf. Gen 15, 13-14.

¹⁴³ Cf. Jn 4, 53.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Gen. 17, 10; Ex. 3, 6-9; Lev. 26, 44-45.

How when Jesus dismissed his spirit he experienced great sorrow.
(Part IV, esp. cap. 10).

5051 Oh be still please, all of you who love Jesus Christ I beg of you. Look on with devotion and compassion as we sorrowfully contemplate, the anxiety, pain and torment that was experienced when his most excellent soul was constrained to leave his most worthy and sacred body,¹⁴⁵ where, for thirty-three years, like two lovers in the same bed, it had been at blessed rest so sweetly, peacefully, happily. How unwillingly they parted from one another for between them there had never been any discord, argument, injury or any lack of friendship, but only the deepest love, peace and union.

With all devotion let us contemplate the sacred body, the instrument of our salvation, that was overcome with so much pain, when all its veins had run dry, completely devoid of nutrition, all its nerves and other limbs withered, as if the last trace of health had vanished and it was ready for the indescribable pain and suffering of death. Who could look upon the beautiful face of Jesus which had become pail, disfigured and the colour of death without feeling compassion, compunction and sorrow? The eyes have become dim but are still filled with tears. When the hour arrived, which had been determined and fixed *ab aeterno*, kind Jesus, bowed his head towards his sorrowful mother, as if offering her a last greeting and seeking her permission, and at the same time entrusting his torn body to her as well as to all mankind. It was as if he was giving a final greeting and asking final permission to depart and offering a kiss of peace. The Saviour lowered his head to tell us of the great weight of our sins that he had taken upon himself.¹⁴⁶

5052 Faithful soul, now consider the infinite love of your God and see how he loved you to the ultimate extremity of his life. Notice how; even when all his limbs were oppressed by death and he felt that his spirit and life were failing, nevertheless he still displayed signs and clear witness by means of his limbs to the love which he felt.¹⁴⁷

See here the real Jacob, blessing his children with his arms and lifting his feet from the bed of the cross, returns to his Father. Gaze on the most sweet and loveable limbs of Christ, after he had died, still demonstrating to us the same love and kindness that he had for us when he was alive. His arms are stretched out to embrace us, his eyes are cast down to look at us, his head is bent to kiss us, his wounds are open so that we may enter into them and take refuge there. Out of love he leans his holy body, which a little earlier he had surrendered to the Father, towards us. He had offered himself to the Father with tears while presenting another plea for our reconciliation with the eternal Father and giving us another sign that he had already given a kiss of peace.

In addition to this, Christ bowed his head towards the ground, distancing himself from the glorious title that had been placed above him on the cross, showing how he despised all glory and honour and wished to spend his whole life in abject and vile poverty, and making it clear that nothing in this world meant anything to him, thus, at the end of his life, he provided us with very valuable instruction.¹⁴⁸ So when

¹⁴⁵ In the margin: *Experiencing great sorrow Christ's soul was separated from his body.* This passage is contained on page 160.

¹⁴⁶ In the margin: *The meaning of Christ lowering his head.*

¹⁴⁷ In the margin: *By means of these signs Christ showed his love for as long as he was able.*

¹⁴⁸ In the margin: *The instruction that Christ gave us at the end of his life.*

we find ourselves among people who have given us some honour or praise, we should demean ourselves down to the earth, criticising ourselves, and think to ourselves: “¹⁴⁹You who are earth and ashes, why are you feeling proud?” In this way, therefore, life on the cross will not fail to pour the fruit of life from the wood of the cross. In this way this most worthy and excellent valuable gift was completed for us. By means of this gift all our debts were cancelled and as he carried this out faithfully and achieved it on behalf of the Father, he returned to him, placing his own spirit in his hands, as if saying: “O most sweet Father, you placed all the demerits of mankind on me and I willingly received them and accepted them for love of you, I became like a bandit in a foreign land.”

5053 “In addition to this I was arrested and mocked. I was nailed, wounded and I finally died. I endured your anger overcoming me, so that when it had been appeased by my torments, pains and suffering mankind might receive your grace. I fulfilled all that love and justice required, and at the same time, I accomplished what was required by mercy. I offered up everything and gave it all to you, my will, my body for the Jews, my blood for sinners, by clothes to my tormentors, my dear mother to my disciple, and I had nothing left except my afflicted, oppressed and anguished spirit. There was nowhere under heaven where I was welcome except in the heart of my most precious and sorrowful mother. However, she was stricken with so much affliction and anxiety that she could no longer understand it. In truth this caused my spirit more suffering, more sorrow and more reason to be upset than to be consoled. Because of this I turn to you mainly because you are totally conscious of my infinite suffering and incredible sorrow and I ask that you take my anxious spirit into your hands”.

As soon as the loving Jesus released his spirit, the veil of the temple was torn, the earth shook, stones split and graves were opened and many of the dead rose.¹⁵⁰ Thus having puffy eyes, and pale sorrowful face the most beautiful man of all men became the most mistreated of all men was made a sweet smelling holocaust, for mankind in order to revoke his Father’s anger which mankind deserved. Behold then from your sanctuary, O Holy Father, the face of your Christ. Behold this most holy Host which the Supreme Pontiff offered for our sins.¹⁵¹

5054 Now my soul, if you can find any mark of gratitude or shadow of pity, feel compassion and weep over the cruel death of your Redeemer¹⁵². Weep at the slaughter of the immaculate Lamb because it was for you that he was killed, for you he underwent the suffering of the cross and the pain. Your sins placed him in such distress and anxiety. He became so infirm so that you might be healed and shed his own blood to make a bath to wash and to cure your incurable leprosy. See how much he loved you when to confer honour on you he made himself despicable. To console you he let himself become afflicted. To obtain pardon for you he took your sins upon himself and took your punishment upon himself.

What incomprehensible goodness!¹⁵³ Who has ever heard of someone who has been offended taking the punishment upon himself, and sacrificing himself for the enemy who offended him? If this is the case, let us weep with all our limbs so as to

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Sir. 10, 9.

¹⁵⁰ In the margin: *Signs that happened when Jesus died.*

¹⁵¹ This passage can be read on page 367.

¹⁵² In the margin: *We ought to weep over Christ’s death.*

¹⁵³ In the margin: *The unspeakable goodness of our Lord and Master.*

provoke sensitivity in creatures who are not sensitive. Who could understand sufficiently how much sorrow and torment it took to undo the knot that the Holy Spirit made to fasten that most worthy soul to Christ's venerable body? Only a lover and the beloved could know the kind of love involved. Who could wonder sufficiently about the eclipse that occurred in Christ's most lucid eyes which with a glance illumined the earth with their rays like two shining stars in heaven illumine the world but which are now dimmed by the darkness of death? It is no wonder that darkness covered the whole face of the earth when the sun of justice was taken from the world and had closed his eyes.

5055 O most marvellous instrument, O delightful lyre or sweet trumpet Christ's living voice,¹⁵⁴ the sweet melody of which gives joy to the Father and gives the Angels immeasurable happiness. Its beautiful sound instructs the living, awakens the dead, heals those who are ill, refreshes those who are hungry, drives out devils, rouses those who are negligent and those who sleep and makes them alert and careful. Ask, we beg of you, who was it that imposed such harmful silence upon you? Deprived of your sweet words and of your gentle and cheerful voice we fell wretchedly into horrible clamour.

O glorious breast of Christ,¹⁵⁵ O divine gathering-place, O heavenly ark where all the treasures of divine wisdom and knowledge are kept together, and where all the wealth of heavenly strength and spiritual things are contained, out of which you breathed the spirit of life on all creatures, who took away your life! O blessed hands,¹⁵⁶ instruments of the supreme and eternal Artisan, which remove any infirmity by a mere touch, which blessed the world, who would dare bind you so brutally to the cross completely forgetting the great good which they worked for us? O Jesus Christ, meek Lamb, why are there horrible wounds in your hands? You answered us by means of the Prophet: "I received these wounds in the house of them that loved me",¹⁵⁷ that is, those whose love I should have rationally and deservedly received, but who it would appear killed me.

O sacred feet of Jesus,¹⁵⁸ columns of the divine temple that are set on the foundation of justice, fittingly decorated with the tresses of charity, feet which never strayed at all from the narrow path of charity but going ahead of everyone demonstrated to all the true road to perfection, and by that teaching left footprints of twofold charity, why are you now stiff and motionless? While close to these feet and experiencing the most fervent love Magdalene found abundant grace Beneath these feet the sea had become calm and like a firm road. Why did you destroy it?

5056 The elements themselves, as was proper, paid homage to you, while cruel men crucified you on a cross. O most glorious head of Jesus Christ,¹⁵⁹ purest tabernacle of God, as you were made so by the mysterious activity of the Holy Spirit who created you out of the nature of the most pure and perfect Virgin Mother Mary and adorned you with every virtue, who was it that destroyed you so wretchedly, struck you down and put you on the ground?

¹⁵⁴ In the margin: *Christ's voice and its marvellous results.*

¹⁵⁵ In the margin: *Christ's glorious breast, ark of heavenly treasures.*

¹⁵⁶ In the margin: *Christ's hands, instruments of a gentle artisan.*

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Zach, 13, 6.

¹⁵⁸ In the margin: *Jesus' feet columns of the divine temple.*

¹⁵⁹ In the margin: *Christ's head, God's tabernacle.*

O man, now look at Christ's face, which the Angels behold with unspeakable delight. Now it has completely changed and is contorted, completely covered in filth and without colour and devoid of any beauty whatsoever. Look now at the whole of his sacred body as far as the soles of his feet, nothing but wounds and blood will be engraved on your heart at seeing this horrible image of your Redeemer. Keep the image of this deformed face before your eyes continually. Let it always remain fixed and impressed on all your senses and in all your thoughts, so that it dismisses all that is useless and futile.

Come, come, and let us become sad along with him,¹⁶⁰ because he is flesh and blood like us. He died so brutally for our sins and not for his own sins. O all of you who passed the cross of Jesus with lukewarm and cold hearts, if all of these terrible torments, amazing tears and warm blood that was flowing abundantly like water did not move you emotionally, this loud and terrifying voice (when it cried out to the Father saying: "Father into your hands I commend my spirit"¹⁶¹) ought to break and penetrate your hearts. May this voice that had made the heavens, the earth and hell tremble, which had split rocks, opened ancient graves and called forth the dead, melt your hearts of stone which are filled with the stench of rotten bones, that is with vicious actions, and make your dead spirits rise, by saying the same thing as another voice said long ago: "Adam where are you?"¹⁶² What have you done?" It drew Lazarus from the tomb when it said: "Lazarus, come forth".¹⁶³ You ought to come out of the tomb of your vices and free yourself from what is binding you. Actually, it was not so much the cruelty of the suffering as the weight of the sins that was the reason why Christ shouted so loudly. He is still shouting to show that he has power over "the living and the dead, over death and life."¹⁶⁴

5057 Although because of all that had happened his strength had waned, and his human vigour had suffered the pains of a most cruel death. Nevertheless death was restrained from having as much power over him as it would have liked.

He cried out loudly to startle worldly men, who seek nothing but what is earthly, and to make them consider and to think that the Lord passed through this life poor and naked. He cried out terrifyingly so that the noise might wake up those who were bent on pleasure¹⁶⁵ who have grown old in their filth, and who like dead dogs exude a frightful stench or like animals that become putrid in their own dung. This was done so that the wretches would finally arise for the last time from their lust, covetousness, pleasure, faults and foolishness and consider how the Son of God, who would never have done wrong (even the slightest), went to his Father with such a great effort, death, sorrow and loss of life, and how he finally arrived in his Father's kingdom following such great anguish and affliction. Notwithstanding this they believe that they are blessed and can go to heaven indulging in pleasure, doing what they want to and satisfying every natural desire and concupiscence. The Lord also shouted as loudly as he did in order to incite devotion and kindle love in all those who are lazy and lukewarm.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁰ In the margin: *We ought to weep over Christ for many reasons.*

¹⁶¹ Cf. 23, 46. In the margin: *Christ's voice at the end of his life should penetrate our hearts.*

¹⁶² Gen. 3, 9.

¹⁶³ Jn. 11, 43.

¹⁶⁴ In the margin: *Why Christ is shouting so loudly.*

¹⁶⁵ In the margin: *To awaken to God's love those who are lazy and lukewarm.*

¹⁶⁶ In the margin: *The lazy and lukewarm are urged to love Christ.*

He cried out with a loud voice as a mark of the glorious victory that he had won, when, after having had to fight against a cruel enemy and come down into the confusion of this world, they threw him to the ground on Mount Calvary and took off his garments. I say that this victory and glorious triumph depicts Jesus as having a loud voice as well as a worthy victory and a wonderful triumph, as he leaves the site of his abasement surrounded by the merits of his achievements from which he goes to a place that is prestigious and delightful beyond anything, that is, to his father's heart and breast.

5038 Come, faithful and devout soul, because of this, dwell on the going and coming of your spouse Jesus, follow him with emotion and desire to this room and fine bed¹⁶⁷ wishing the same thing for yourself from his Father's heart. Happy is he who can be dissolved with Christ and die together with the thief and hear the Lord say those words so full of comfort: "Today you shall be with me in paradise."¹⁶⁸ Even though we are not permitted to do this, nevertheless let us send all that wearies us to the Father through Christ, asking, fasting and praying to obtain it, throwing ourselves into the stream from which he came to us. Let nothing of pointless delight remain in us. May nothing to do with desire, praise, honour or reward remain in mankind, but only whatever our God condescends to achieve in us, casting ourselves once more into his hands, while saying:

"We are nothing of ourselves. He made us we did not make ourselves.¹⁶⁹ We did not make all the good things, whatever is good came to us through him and without him nothing came to be.¹⁷⁰ Thus as he brings everything with him we are certainly nothing. Jesus committed his soul into the hands of his Father¹⁷¹ to demonstrate that, now, following him, the souls of pious and good people are in the Father's breast, whereas formerly they were in hell or limbo, for he has cleared the way and made the road safe. He became our safe guide to conduct us to the Kingdom of heaven to enter which he made us worthy by means of his infinite mercy and the merits of his most sacred Passion.

5059 My most sweet Lord Jesus Christ, who entrusted my soul to your Father by dying on the cross, grant me the grace, I beg of you, to die spiritually with you in this life, so that at the hour of my death, you will present my soul and my body in your sacred and perforated hands, so that I may praise and bless you forever. *Amen.*

My most sweet Lord Jesus Christ, who by means of your more ardent charity and to show me how close you held me to your heart, wished the most precious side of your dead body to be opened and have blood and water flow from it, pierce and wound my heart with your most sacred love, enlightening my mind with your gentle and sweet wisdom, and grant me the grace, Lord, to die to all my vices and evil desires and live in you and experience you alone, so that by grounding my frail life on charity in this life I may immediately enter into you, who are my heart's real paradise and not seek anything but what you want.

Lord, enter into my heart through the wound in your side, the secret of your charity, the treasure of your divinity so that I may adore you alone, my true God, who

¹⁶⁷ In the margin: *We should follow Christ when he dies.*

¹⁶⁸ Cf. LK, 23, 43.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Ps 99, 3. (*Vulg.*)

¹⁷⁰ Jn. 1, 3.

¹⁷¹ In the margin: *Jesus committed his soul to the Father and why he did this.* The following number 5059 is taken from ch. 11, part IV.

was crucified for me, died and whose side was pierced for me by a lance, and remove all that is visible, worldly or pertains to the senses. Remove from my memory, self-love, and vain and earthly fear, so that I may always behold only you and heed you in everything. While not going over my sins, may I praise, bless and enjoy your divine presence forever. *Amen.*

8. *Concerning the glory of paradise.*
(Part V: Introduction).

5060 “Whoever loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I shall love him and manifest myself to him,” says Christ in St John’s Gospel.¹⁷² With these words the Son of God promises those who love him the prize of him loving them that is the manifestation or clear vision of him. This most clear vision implies that whoever sees one of the divine and uncreated persons sees the whole of the superabundant Trinity. We are not able to see clearly what this is in itself by only seeing one of the divine Persons, if the other two are not seen as they are in themselves. Thus during the last supper, the Apostle Phillip said to Christ: “Lord, show us the Father: and Jesus replied: “Phillip, whoever sees me, also sees the Father.”¹⁷³

Thus to one who truly loves him God the Father promises the prize of seeing his only begotten Son when he says: “I will deliver him, and I will glorify him, and will fill him with length of days and I will show him my Saviour.”¹⁷⁴ Simeon the Just speaks about the Saviour to the eternal Father: “my eyes have seen thy salvation which you sent into the world, which you have placed before the eyes of your people.”¹⁷⁵

This blessed vision is the true, complete, perfect, ultimate, eternal and highest salvation of all intelligent and rational creatures that is of angels and mankind. By acquiring this vision what we desire will be satisfied and fulfilled as the prophet indicated when he said: “I shall be satisfied when your glory shall appear.” In a similar way he said: “You fill me with joy with your countenance.”¹⁷⁶

The highest Creator and the true and living God above all wanted that knowing him and seeing him face to face would be the final goal of chosen holy people which would make them happy and would be the objective and fulfilment of what they desired.¹⁷⁷ Thus we read that Moses begged the Lord: “If I have found favour in your sight, show me your face, so that I may recognise you.”¹⁷⁸ Similarly the psalmist said: “Lord, (he said), God of hosts, convert us to you, and show us your face, and we shall be saved.”¹⁷⁹ The Apostle Paul said: “I desire to be dissolved from this body and be with Christ.”¹⁸⁰

5061 Because I have already shown you and demonstrated to you God’s great and immeasurable love for you, it remains to explain more fully our love for God and to write about the great reward to be conferred on those who love him with a good and sincere heart. The prize is the clear and blessed vision, knowledge and enjoyment of

¹⁷² Cf. Jn 14, 21.

¹⁷³ Cf. Jn 14, 8-9. In the margin: *Whoever sees one of the three persons sees the Trinity itself.*

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Ps 90. 15-16 (*Vulg.*)

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Lk 2, 30-31.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Ps 16, 15; 15 11.

¹⁷⁷ In the margin: *Saintly people desire above all to behold God.*

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Ex 13, 18.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Ps 92, 8, 4, 20 (*Vulg.*)

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Phil 1, 23

the blessed Trinity in the one God, which defies description. This will enable us, by means of the acknowledgement, praise, vision of the omnipotent God, to be inflamed with much desire and love for happiness, to flee from and to avoid very carefully whatever delays our progress towards such a great and noble acquisition of the blessed vision, that is any sin or iniquity, self-love, whether carnal, spiritual or worldly that would cause God to turn his back on us preventing us from loving his divine Majesty with good, sincere and perfect love. To such people as these, when the very blessed and very holy prince of the Apostles, St Peter, wrote his first Epistle he said: “You love Jesus Christ even though you have not yet seen him, and by believing in him you enjoy inexpressible happiness and are glorified, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”¹⁸¹ By means of these words, he, in the first place, praises the faithful, who, although they have not seen Christ with their bodily eyes, still love him. In the second place they believe in him, clearly for who he is. He indicates the fruit of this love and faith. By seeing Jesus clearly, that is in himself, we experience joy, incredible joy and happiness, receiving faith and charity, that is the salvation of our souls, that is salvation that consists in seeing Jesus Christ in his exalted divinity, in the fullness of the glorious Trinity, which possesses only one Godhead, one and one power essence clearly, face to face without any medium.¹⁸²

5062 Arise, arise, therefore dearest brother, give a little thought to the sublime happiness of paradise and the immensity of the eternal glory of the blessed. Such intense consideration and devout contemplation is a very ardent dart that can enlighten and inflame each one of us with divine love. This is the best way of doing this. I earnestly exhort you to love God. In brief I present you with a method of doing this, because by loving we are following the way to perpetual beatitude.

¹⁸¹ Cf. 1 Pet. 1, 8-9.

¹⁸² In the margin: *Salvation of contrite souls in the vision of God.*