

of all the modes of paying the last penalty He willingly chose the most shameful and the most inhuman. For, the torment of crucifixion was but one long lingering agony, wherein life was quenched by slow degrees and amidst atrocious sufferings. Meanwhile, the wretched victim, stript of his garments and overwhelmed with confusion, hung for hours an object of contempt and ridicule for a jeering and heartless rabble. It would seem that he was raised on high, on the degrading rood, the better to command a view of all the crowd that had gathered to witness his opprobrious death. The imagination can conjure up no more repulsive sight; and nothing more horrible has ever been devised for the torture of the guilty, or more ignominious for the slave who was condemned to suffer death.

All this the Apostle thoroughly understood when he said: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written: *Cursed is every one that hangeth on the tree*: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the gentiles through Christ Jesus: that we may receive the promise of the Spirit by faith" (Gal. III.). Now, while redeeming us from the curse of the law, by hanging on the tree He sanctified that tree and made it for evermore an object of veneration among Christians. The Cross, consequently, or with still more reason the Crucifix, that is, the Cross bearing the figure of Our Lord crucified, is become for us the image before all others to be revered, and which none other can ever replace; it is the official and liturgical emblem of the Church, surmounting the altar of the sacrifice; it is the standard of the King of Christians, *Vexilla Regis*.

And how could it be otherwise? Was it not alluded to by Christ as an integral part of, or at least intimately connected with His preordained sacrifice? Moses had made a brazen serpent, and had set it up for a sign "which when they that were bitten looked upon they were healed" (Numb. XXI, 9), and, referring to this figure in the Old Testament,