

sins of men, without the consent of the Mother who, of her own free will, offered him to death. But although Mary, from the moment she was Mother of Jesus Christ, had consented to his death, it was the Lord willed it, so that she should on that day make, in the Temple, a solemn sacrifice much greater than that of herself, in offering her Son to divine justice. It is for that reason that Saint Epiphanius gives her the name of priest. What heroic virtue she must have had to subscribe, of her own free will, to the sentence of death on her beloved Son! For that very purpose it is that Mary journeys to Jerusalem. She walks courageously to the place of sacrifice, and, in bitterness of heart, carries the victim in her arms. She enters the Temple, approaches the altar, and there, penetrated with sentiments of modesty, humility, and devotion, she presents her Son to the Most High. At that moment, St. Simeon, to whom the Lord had promised that he should not die until he had seen the Messiah, takes the divine infant from the hands of his Mother, and, enlightened by the Holy Ghost, he announces to her what the holocaust she then made was to cost her, as her soul was also to be sacrificed, pierced by a sword of grief. It is to mothers that I appeal to form any idea of the anguish which the Mother of the Saviour must have felt at that sorrowful prediction! What rational man fails to perceive that the maternal feeling is the most courageous, the most tender, the most constant, the most devoted, and the most tried, of all feelings? Most mothers share their tenderness amongst several children, while Mary concentrates all hers upon one Son. And what a Son!—the most beautiful of the children of men; possessing, in himself alone, in the highest perfection, merits, qualities, virtues, scattered amongst all children. That sublime and tender Mother knows what right her Son has to an infinite, supernatural love, both as God and as the Redeemer of men. On that account, she sees only in that beloved child the victim that she must voluntarily deliver up to death, in order to redeem from eternal death the unhappy children of Adam.

Mary is, then, at the same time the most fortunate of mothers, in being the

mother of a God; and the mother most deserving of compassion, because she is overwhelmed with affliction, seeing her son foredoomed to a death of torture.

What mother would consent to give birth to a son, if she knew that he must one day die on the scaffold before her eyes? Mary willingly accepts that Son on so hard a condition; and not only does she accept him, *but she herself on this day offers him up with her own hand to the divine justice.*

"Mary," says Saint Bonaventura, "would have very willingly accepted for herself the pains and the death of her Son, but, in obedience to God, she made the great offering of the life of her Son, Jesus; she overcame, though with the most heart-rending grief, all the love she bore him." Hence it was that Mary, in that offering, must have done herself more violence than if she had offered herself to endure all that the Saviour was to suffer; she outdid the generosity of all the martyrs, since the martyrs offered up only their life, but the Blessed Virgin offered up the life of her Son, which she loved and valued incomparably more than her own.

The grief of Mary did not end with that offering, it was then only commencing; for, from that moment, the divine Mother had incessantly present to her mind the death of Jesus, and all the pains that he was to endure in his Passion. It was not only in the Temple, therefore, that Mary offered her divine Son to death, but she offered him every moment of her life, for she revealed to Saint Bridget that the grief announced by Saint Simeon ceased not till after her Assumption. And Saint Bernard, speaking of the great sadness in which Mary was plunged on this day, says: "From that time she died every moment of her life, because she was every moment tortured with grief for the future death of her beloved Son, a grief more cruel than death itself."

It is because of the merit she acquired in offering to God that great sacrifice for the salvation of the world, that Mary is called the restorer of mankind, the co-redemptress of the lost world, the remedy of our misfortunes, the Mother of all the faithful, the Mother of the living, the Mother of life; for, at the death of Jesus, Mary so united her will to that of her