

He advances with tottering steps toward Calvary, where His enemies are going to put Him to death ! One of those women, unable to bear so distressing a sight, boldly rushes toward the holy Victim and, with her veil, wipes the august Face, which is covered with blood, dust, mud, and foul spittle. By a miracle of condescension, Jesus impresses His features on the linen presented Him by this kind hearted woman.

Forgetful of His own sufferings, Jesus now casts a look full of tenderness on the women, and, in gentle tones, addresses to them these words, harsh in sound, but in reality full of kindness : "*Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days shall come wherein they shall say: Blessed are the barren and the wombs that have not borne, and the paps that have not given suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains: Fall upon us; and to the hills; Cover us. For if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?*"

"*Weep not over Me, but over yourselves!*" The Divine Saviour does not refuse the compassion of the holy women, but He desired, above all, that they should mourn over what made Him weep and suffer, that is, sin, their own personal sins, those of their children, and chiefly the enormous crime of deicide. They will understand all its greatness and malice on the day when, to avenge this enormity, God's wrath will be let loose upon the Jewish nation. The mothers would then mourn over a fecundity which had served only to furnish victims for divine justice. The woes that would then overwhelm their nation would be so horrible that the Jews would look upon a sudden death as a desirable fate.

And in order to give to the Jews an idea of the torments they would have to endure, Jesus, referring to His lacerated head and wounded members, adds these words : "*For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?*" In Holy Scripture the just man is often compared to a fruitful tree planted near the running waters, and the sinner to a withered tree. Jesus, the Just *par excellence*, is, indeed, this green wood, this fruitful tree, laden with flowers and fruits of all kinds, with virtues and good actions. Saint Luke tells us that virtue went forth from Him, and cured all ills. His words were words of life, and all agreed in declaring