

ceremony of *washing the feet*, in those churches where the practice is still retained, as at Rome, where the pope himself officiates, humbling himself as the servant of the poor, in honor of the charity and humility so forcibly inculcated by the Son of God.

On the following day, which is emphatically termed *Good Friday*, the sacrifice of Calvary engrosses the whole attention of the church, and her office breathes throughout a spirit of the deepest affliction. Her naked altars and her ministers clad in sable vestments, bespeak her sorrowing. At the commencement of the morning service the officiating clergymen lie prostrate on the steps of the altar, to denote the profound sentiment of grief awakened by the doleful events of Calvary: and, while they are in this posture, a lesson is sung containing the divine mandate for the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, which prefigured the bloody sacrifice on the cross. This ceremony is followed by the chaunting of our Saviour's passion, as recorded by St. John, to impress upon our minds and hearts the boundless charity which led Him to become a victim for the salvation of men. On this day the church offers her special prayers for persons of every condition. At all times does she supplicate the Almighty in behalf of those who are wandering in the devious ways of perdition; but to show her abhorrence of wilful apostacy and contumacious error, she forbids her ministers to name at her altar those who are chargeable with such crimes. But on Good Friday she makes an exception to her general discipline, because on that day Christ died for all men. The recollection of this event seems to banish for a moment all distinction among the different classes of the human family, that they may all obtain by a fervent appeal to heaven the blessings of that redemption which was effected on Calvary. After these prayers follow the exposition and veneration of the cross, a ceremony which is deeply affecting to the heart of the devout Christian, and would suffice, of itself, to refute all the arguments that prejudice has ever wielded against the beautiful symbolism of Catholic piety. The service then closes with the mass *præ-sanctificationum*, so called from the previous consecration, as already stated, of the sacred elements.

The office which properly belongs to Holy Saturday, that of *tenebræ*, relates en-

tirely to the sufferings of our Lord, and His descent into the tomb. The ceremony which is now performed on the morning of this day, took place formerly at night, as is plain from the language of the liturgy. It commences with the blessing of fire newly struck from the flint, a rite that may be traced to the remotest antiquity, though then more frequently practised. This fire is used for lighting the lamps of the church and the paschal candle, and is symbolic of the new spiritual fire which the mystery of Christ's resurrection should kindle in our hearts. The blessing of the paschal candle is likewise a very ancient ceremony, and is mentioned by some of the Fathers in the most pompous terms. This candle is a figure of Christ rising from the dead, the light of the world and the first-born of the elect, and there is perhaps no portion of the Catholic liturgy more beautiful in sentiment or more impressive in its style, than the prayers in which the church announces these consoling truths. The five pieces of incense attached to it, are symbols of the five precious wounds which he received for our redemption. After this twelve prophecies are read, for the instruction of the catechumens, or those who are to receive baptism; for in the first ages of the church baptism was solemnly administered, only on the vigils of Easter and Whitsunday, and on these days such as were to be admitted into the church, received their final instruction. In Rome, the custom on Holy Saturday is still preserved. From this usage there arose another, that of consecrating the water for baptism, a rite that may be traced to the very earliest period of the church. This office is terminated by a solemn mass, at which the bells again send forth their joyous peals, and repeated alleluias express the exultation of the church at the anticipated resurrection of her Divine Spouse.

This joy she invites all her children to share with her; and for this purpose she enjoins a more rigid fast during the holy week, that by acts of sincere and efficacious penance we may worthily commemorate the great mystery which she proposes to our consideration at this time; that from the sufferings of Christ we may conceive a due horror of sin, learn the practice of the virtues which become His followers, and thus by the imitation of His example obtain some part in the glory of His resurrection.