

Month of the Holy Souls.

"Weeping she hath wept into the night; there is none to comfort among all them that were dear to her."—*Lamentations*, 1, 2.

HERE is in suffering something sadder than the suffering itself; there is abandonment. To suffer and to find a kindred soul that remembers us and compassionates is to suffer but half; but to suffer and to know that no one enters into our sorrow, that no one blends his tears, his sighs with ours, is to multiply grief by grief. It was this which wrung from Job in his misery, and from Jeremias weeping over the fall of Jerusalem, their most grief-laden sighs. It is this fact which lends to the sufferings of the souls in Purgatory a sovereign interest, and calls most eloquently on our compassion. They above all others have a right to cry out in the terrible reality of their abandonment, "You have heard the voice of our groanings, and amongst you there is found none to console us." The poets of Paganism tell us that the dead, after leaving this life, drank, in a river called Lethe, forgetfulness of the living. This is a fiction; but it is a sad reality that the living forget the dead.

Have you ever reflected upon this phenomenon so mortifying to the dead, so humiliating to ourselves, the forgetfulness of the dead? When the face of man has been taken away before our eyes, his remembrance quickly fades out of our soul. When we hold in our hand the hand of our dying brother, when he looked into our eyes and said, "You at least will not forget me," we told him that we would not, that we would rather die than forget him. But what a traitorous heart is ours! The days wear on and our dead wear out of our minds; and new friendships germinating in our hearts, complete the work which advancing time has begun.

And yet the dead are not wholly forgotten. There is one heart in which they ever abide; Mother Church forgets not one of her children. Hearken to her, as on the day of the Commemoration of all the dead, she cries aloud: "Be consoled, dear souls, your mother forgets not. If all your friends forget you, if they pray no more for you, I will always pray, I will never forget. I will call into my house your sisters and brothers that they may weep and pray, that they may soothe your pain and hasten the hour of your deliverance. I will send my priests to them; I will put into their voice the accents of mine, and I will tell them: Go and move the hearts of your living brethren to compassion for the dead. Speak loudly to them, for deep is the silence which encompasses my dead; speak strongly to them, and fear not to tell them that their conduct is inhuman, is opposed to all brotherly love."

Thus speaks Mother Church, and that she does well to qualify our conduct as inhuman, this one proof will suffice. The souls in Purgatory, so pain-stricken, so utterly forgotten, are absolutely powerless to help themselves. On the earth, even in our hour of supremest agony, we have no idea of such a situation. The wretch abandoned by

all can find in himself a last resource; if his right hand fail him, he can call upon his left; and if both fail him, he has, in his own heart, a refuge where God awaits him to succor and to save him.

But to suffer and to know that our sufferings are barren; to shed tears of fire and to know that this burning dew is powerless to bring forth aught save pain superadded to pain until the day when justice, after counting the hours and weighing the punishment, shall say: It is enough; this is the pain of pains, the punishment of punishments. Poets and romancers who strive to arouse our sympathies by the spectacle of great misfortunes, have ever chosen lone, barren, wave-beaten rocks to be the scene of the calamities they depict. There they set down abandoned creatures and picture them reaching out towards passing vessels their suppliant hands and sending up, amidst the noises of the wind and the sea, the cry of their extreme distress. These inventions, which have often brought tears to our eyes, are not even a shadow of the sufferings of the souls in Purgatory. There is a place more barren than all the deserts of the world, there is a rock more arid than ever poet's fancy dreamt of, a rock blazing with the fires of justice, a rock upon which our brethren have been cast by the shipwreck of life. Erect upon this desolate shore, with arms turned towards this world, they lift up their tear-laden voices, they cry out to us from amidst the darkness which encircles them: "Oh, all you who sail upon the sea of life whereon we so lately rode, oh pause and see if there be any suffering like our suffering." And the voices that come to us are the voices of fathers and mothers, of husbands and wives, of brothers and sisters, of friends made dear by a thousand ties. Can we, like thoughtless, heartless sailors, pass on and heed them not? It is not as if we were unable to succor. Within reach of our hands are the gifts, many and sovereign, which will relieve their sorrows and hasten their deliverance. Prayers, fasts, abstinences, alms deeds, communions, masses, the countless indulgences placed by the Church within our reach—these are some of the fountains of mercy whose cooling waters we can bring to bear upon the penal fires of Purgatory.

Surely the Master who said: I was hungry and you gave me not to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me not to drink, therefore are you cast out from before my face, will visit with rigorous punishment the cold, heartless Christian who has refused to bestir himself and bring relief to his suffering brethren in Purgatory. And just as surely will His hand be reached out in mercy to him who has not forgotten his dead, but with prayer, and indulgence, and communion, and Mass has lightened their burden and shortened their pain and hastened the hour of their deliverance, of their arrival in that fatherland where pain is not, nor sorrow, but joy eternal in the company of God and His saints.