

« wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction . . .
« but the way of the Lord we have not known. What hath
« pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of
« riches brought us? All those things are passed away like a
« shadow, like a post that runneth on; as a ship that passeth
« through the waves whereof when it is gone by, the trace
« cannot be found nor the path of its keel on the waters; or
« as when a bird flieth through the air, of the passage of which
« no mark can be found but only the sound of the wings beating
« the light wind and parting the air by the force of her flight;
« she hath moved her wings and flown through, and there is no
« mark found afterwards of her way . . . So we also being born,
« forthwith ceased to be and have been able to show no mark
« of virtue but are consumed in our wickedness. Such things
« as these the sinners said in hell; for the hope of the wicked
« is as dust which is blown away with the winds and as a thin
« froth which is dispersed by the storm and as smoke that is
« scattered abroad by the wind and as the remembrance of a
« guest of one day that passeth by.» (Wisdom, Ch. v.)

Dear reader, read this passage from the book of Wisdom over again; it teaches us the most salutary lesson while, at the same time, it is a page of the greatest eloquence with which the most boasted attempts of profane orators cannot be compared.

The priest puts ashes *on our heads* to remind us of the indispensable necessity of humility in repentance. In vain could we hope for the pardon of our sins if pride continued to inflate our hearts. God resists the proud and grants His grace to the humble. To what end would prayer, fasting and alms serve, were they not accompanied by a sincere avowal and firm detestation of sin? The pharisee boasts and goes away guiltier; the publican humbly confesses and leaves the temple carrying with him pardon of his sins. What a thunderbolt to strike down the proud man are the words pronounced by the priest as he puts the ashes on our heads. « *Remember, man, that thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return.* » Add to this the thought of death, of eternity that follows it and say whether this liturgical ceremony is not calculated to touch our