

For the Catholic Church, God's Revelation is found in Sacred Tradition, understood as God's Revealed Word handed down by the Living Teaching Authority established by Christ in the Church. That includes both Written Tradition (Scripture) and Unwritten Tradition received from Christ and handed down Orally by the Apostles and their Successors. The Church founded by Christ on Peter, and only that Church, has been Empowered by Christ to 'Interpret' His Teaching Authoritatively in His Name.

Scripture is *Inspired*; *Inspiration* really means that God Himself is the Chief Author of the Scriptures. He uses a Human Agent, in so marvelous a way that the Human writes what the Holy Spirit wants him to write, does so without Error, yet the Human Writer is Free, and keeps his own Style of Language. It is only because God is *Transcendent that He can do this - insure Freedom from Error, while leaving the Human Free. To say He is Transcendent means that He is above and beyond all our Human Classifications and Categories.*

John was writing his eye-witness account of Jesus some thirty years later than the other three accounts, possibly around 95AD. There had been time for growth, reflection and observation. Many thousands of Christians had by then lost their lives for their faith in the Lord Jesus, both in Rome and in Jerusalem. John himself had been in prison and was now in exile, the last of Jesus' twelve apostles to remain alive.

Considered one of the most important Catholic theologians and Bible commentators, Cornelius à Lapide's, S.J. writings on the Bible, created a Scripture Commentary so complete and scholarly that it was practically the universal commentary in use by Catholics for over 400 years. Fr. Lapide's most excellent commentaries have been widely known for successfully combining piety and practicality. Written during the time of the Counter Reformation, it includes plenty of apologetics. His vast knowledge is only equaled by his piety and holiness.

John 19: 1-34

Douay Rheims Version

The continuation of the history of the Passion of Christ.

1. When therefore Pilate took Jesus and scourged him.
2. And the soldiers plating a crown of thorns, put it upon his head: and they put on him a purple garment.
3. And they came to him and said: Hail, king of the Jews. And they gave him blows.
4. Pilate therefore went forth again and saith to them: Behold, I bring him forth unto you, that you may know that I find no cause in him.
5. (Jesus therefore came forth, bearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment.) And he saith to them: Behold the Man.

afterwards, "Confounded be the Armenians, who in the Mysteries mix not water with the wine. For, as it seems, they do not believe that water flowed forth from the side (which would be more wonderful), but blood only. And in this passage they do away with a mighty miracle. The blood then is the symbol of a crucified man, but the water of one who is above man, that is, of God." See Adam Coutzen and Francis Lucas on this passage.

But this took place by way of mystery. But what mystery? (1.) To show the reality of Christ's human nature. See 1 John v. 7. (2.) To signify that the Church was formed as the Spouse of Christ out of the side of the second Adam dying on the Cross. Symbolically, *i.e.* and figuratively, as meaning that the Church was purchased, founded, and sanctified by the Blood of Christ. As S. Ambrose (on Luke xxiii.) says, "Life flowed forth from that dead body. For water and blood flowed forth, the one to cleanse, the other to redeem;" and as S. Cyril and Chrysostom say, that the water signifies baptism, which is the first beginning, of the Church and the other sacraments, and the blood represents the Eucharist, which is the end and completion of the sacraments, to which they all refer as to their beginning and their end. Whence S. Augustine says (*in loc.*), that all sacraments flowed forth from the side of Christ, in mystery, as I said. His words are, "It is not said that he 'struck' or 'wounded,' but that he 'opened' the side of Christ, that the door of life might thus, as it were, be opened, from whence the sacraments of the Church flowed forth, without which there is no entrance to true life." And S. Chrysostom. "Because the sacred mysteries take their rise from thence, when thou approachest the awful Chalice, thou shouldest approach it as if thou wert about to drink from the very side of Christ;" and the reason is, as S. Chrysostom and Theophylact say, "The Church exists and consists by means of the sacraments." For it is born by Baptism, strengthened by Confirmation, fed and perfected by the Eucharist, healed by Penance, fortified by Extreme Unction, governed by Holy Orders, and continued and extended by Matrimony.

As a symbol of this, Cyprian and others say that water must be mixed with the wine in the consecration of the Chalice.

Tropologically. Tertullian says (*de Baptismo*), that Christ by this effusion of Blood and Water indicated the two kinds of Baptism, by water and by martyrdom.

Anagogically. This opening of Christ's side shadowed forth that heaven, which had been closed for 4000 years, was opened by His death. Ruffinus adds, *In Expos.*

Symb., "He poured forth water to cleanse believers, and blood to condemn unbelievers." See Suarez, *Par. iii. Quæst. li Disput. xli. § 1*, where, however, he thinks that only the left side of Christ was pierced, and that the blood first ran forth, and afterwards the water, both which are equally probable.

This then is a natural effect. I say that it is not natural, but very nearly miraculous; to point out and confound the murderer. And much more was it miraculous in the case of Christ, as I will presently show.

Ver. 34.—*But one of the soldiers opened His side.* As somewhat doubting, says S. Cyril, whether He were really dead; and if He were not, to hasten His death. For it was the duty of these soldiers to carry out the sentence, and to see that criminals were not taken away before it was certain that they were dead. S. Chrysostom adds, “To please the Jews, they lay open His side and insult Him when dead. O most evil and most atrocious wish.” Some suppose that this soldier was the centurion, who cried out “Truly this was the Son of God!” (Matthew xxvii. 54.) But it is not likely that he who so cried out would dare to commit such an act. Nazianzen in his “Christus Patiens” suggests that he was blind, and that he then regained his sight. Many stories on this matter were collected by Barradius, which Baronius rejects as apocryphal. Here note—1. That the soldier was one of the guard who brake the legs of the two malefactors, and would have broken Christ’s also had he been alive. But they pierced His side, to show that He was dead, and this was why they brake not His legs. 2. Some say it was a spear, others a sword which was used. 3. The Vulgate seems to have read, *ήνοιξε*, but the Greek is *ένυξε*. 4. This wound was so large that a hand could have been thrust into it. See John xx. 27. 5. It was on the right side, as represented by painters. Some think it was so foretold by Ezekiel xvii. 2. S. Francis also received his wound on the right side. See S. Bonaventura, Ribadeaeira, &c. 6. Christ therefore received six wounds. 7. This wound seems to have pierced through both sides, as Prudentius says in several passages. As, *e.g.*,

As struck the cruel spear through either side,
Water and Blood poured forth in mingled tide:
For victory this, and that to cleanse applied.

De Pass. Christi [apud Diptych, num. xlii.]; Peristeph. Hymn viii. [151; and Cathomer, Hymn ix. [85]; [Pseudo]-Cyprian also (de Pass.) says the same. Theophylact speaks of this wound in the plural number, Prudentius seems to imply that the larger wound emitted blood, and the smaller wound on the left side water. But this wound on the left side was so small as not to be taken into account. Hence there were only five wounds. S. Bridget’s *Revel.* iv. 40, vii. 15, and ii. 21, are also referred to.

And forthwith came thereout blood and water. Both together (not separately, as Nonnus paraphrases), but yet not mixed, but so that they could be distinguished from each other. But this could not be the case naturally, because the blood of a dead body congeals, and pure blood cannot flow from it. And this was pure blood, not serum, as Innoc. III. lays it down (*Lib. iii. Decret. tit. 41, de Celebr. Miss. cap. viii.*) Calvin is therefore wrong in saying that water is contained in the pericardium. Therefore this flowing forth of blood and water was miraculous, as S. Ambrose on Luke xxiii., Euthymius, and Theophylact say. The latter remarks, “The contumely is changed into a miracle, and wonderful it was that blood flowed forth from a dead body. But a caviller might say that some vital force might probably remain in the body. But the water which flowed forth puts the matter beyond all dispute.” He says

6. When the chief priests, therefore, and the servants had seen him, they cried out, saying: Crucify him, Crucify him. Pilate saith to them: Take him you, and crucify him: for I find no cause in him.
7. The Jews answered him: We have a law; and according to the law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.
8. When Pilate therefore had heard this saying, he feared the more.
9. And he entered into the hall again; and he said to Jesus: Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.
10. Pilate therefore saith to him: Speakest thou not to me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and I have power to release thee?
11. Jesus answered: Thou shouldst not have any power against me, unless it were given thee from above. Therefore, he that hath delivered me to thee hath the greater sin.
12. And from henceforth Pilate sought to release him. But the Jews cried out, saying: If thou release this man, thou art not Caesar’s friend. For whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.
13. Now when Pilate had heard these words, he brought Jesus forth and sat down in the judgment seat, in the place that is called Lithostrotos, and in Hebrew Gabbatha.
14. And it was the parasceve of the pasch, about the sixth hour: and he saith to the Jews: Behold your king.
15. But they cried out: Away with him: Away with him: Crucify him. Pilate saith to them: shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered: We have no king but Caesar.
16. Then therefore he delivered him to them to be crucified. And they took Jesus and led him forth.
17. And bearing his own cross, he went forth to the place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew Golgotha.
18. Where they crucified him, and with him two others, one on each side, and Jesus in the midst.
19. And Pilate wrote a title also: and he put it upon the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.
20. This title therefore many of the Jews did read: because the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city. And it was written in Hebrew, in Greek, and in Latin.
21. Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate: Write not: The King of the Jews. But that he said: I am the King of the Jews.
22. Pilate answered: What I have written, I have written.
23. The soldiers therefore, when they had crucified him, took his garments, (and they made four parts, to every soldier a part) and also his coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.
24. They said then one to another: Let us not cut it but let us cast lots for it, whose it shall be; that the scripture might be fulfilled, saying: They have parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture they have cast lots. And the soldiers indeed did these things.
25. Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother and his mother’s sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen.

26. When Jesus therefore had seen his mother and the disciple standing whom he loved, he saith to his mother: Woman, behold thy son.

27. After that, he saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother. And from that hour, the disciple took her to his own.

28. Afterwards, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said: I thirst.

29. Now there was a vessel set there, full of vinegar. And they, putting a sponge full of vinegar about hyssop, put it to his mouth.

30. Jesus therefore, when he had taken the vinegar, said: It is consummated. And bowing his head, he gave up the ghost.

31. Then the Jews (because it was the parasceve), that the bodies might not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day (for that was a great sabbath day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken: and that they might be taken away.

32. The soldiers therefore came: and they broke the legs of the first, and of the other that was crucified with him.

33. But after they were come to Jesus, when they saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

34. But one of the soldiers with a spear opened his side: and immediately there came out blood and water.

35. And he that saw it hath given testimony: and his testimony is true. And he knoweth that he saith true: that you also may believe.

36. For these things were done that the scripture might be fulfilled: You shall not break a bone of him.

37. And again another scripture saith: They shall look on him whom they pierced.

38. And after these things, Joseph of Arimathea (because he was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews), besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus. And Pilate gave leave. He came therefore and took away the body of Jesus.

39. And Nicodemus also came (he who at the first came to Jesus by night), bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.

40. They took therefore the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths, with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

41. Now there was in the place where he was crucified a garden: and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein no man yet had been laid.

42. There, therefore, because of the parasceve of the Jews, they laid Jesus: because the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

Ver. 1.—*Then Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged Him.* That is after he had said (Luke xxiii. 22), “I will chastise Him and let Him go.” The tradition is that He was first scourged with thick ropes, then with knotted ropes and iron scorpions, then with chains, and lastly with rods of thorns. But Ribera says that these traditions are of little account, as the inhabitants of the country have so often charged, and the old traditions were not kept up.

Ver. 2.—*And they put on Him a purple robe.*—See notes on S. Matt. xxvii. 30, also [Pseudo] Athanasius, *de Cruce*, who says that Christ bore in the purple robe the blood of men (because the devil had polluted the earth with murders), in the thorns their

For this was the sabbath within the octave of the Passover, and for this reason a more solemn day than other sabbaths.

Their legs were to be broken with the strong blows of a mallet or iron bar, to make them die the sooner, from the intensity of the pain, or the loss of blood, or because the vital force resides in the knees and legs. (See *Pliny, N. H.* xi. 45.)

But why did they not pierce their hearts with a spear or sword, which would have been an easier and a quicker death? They preferred to break the legs of criminals, in order to increase their sufferings, as even now notorious criminals are put on the rack. Probably the Jews wished to do this to Christ, out of bitter hatred, and Baronius thinks that they gave Him vinegar to keep Him alive for this further torture. But He was already dead, not because He dreaded this further suffering, but on account of the mystery (of which more presently), but also because His strength was worn out by all He had already undergone. (See *Lipsius, de Cruce*, ii. 14.)

These Jews seemed to urge their being taken down from the cross, not so much from any regard for the sabbath, as from dread, shame, and consciousness of guilt. For they saw the sun darkened, the veil of the temple rent, the earthquake, &c., all which condemned their treatment of Christ. And they therefore feared either that God would punish them, or the people rise up against them as the murderers of Christ. They ordered Him therefore to be taken down from His seat of triumph, and to be buried. See F. Lucas.

Ver. 33.—*But when they came to Jesus* (evidently to break His legs. Euthymius says, “They came to Him last, as wishing to please the Jews by treating Him with greater insult) *and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs.* He did not wish His legs to be broken, for He wished to rise again with an un mutilated body.” As Lactantius says (iv. 26), “His body is taken down from the cross entire, and carefully laid in the tomb, lest by the loss of any limb it might be rendered less seemly for resurrection.”

Instead, then, of His legs being broken, His side was pierced with the spear. This was after He was dead, not while He was alive as some have thought. This error was condemned in the Council of Vienne. For as Christ, while alive, gave up His whole Body for us, so did He in His death wish to give us His heart. For this it was that was pierced by the spear, and blood and water flowed forth from it, so that He gave Himself entirely to us.

You will say that Christ was already dead, and that therefore He merited nothing by this piercing of His heart. But I reply that when alive He knew this wound would be inflicted, and that He offered it to the Father for us, and thus merited and effected our salvation. Thou wilt say next, We see that blood flows from the body of a slain person, if the murderer is present.

husband, or a home or children of her own, she would have retired to them, and not to a stranger." See then how poor the Blessed Virgin was, and how devoted to poverty.

Ver. 28.—*After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.* After about three hours. It was at the beginning of the crucifixion that He commended His mother to S. John. The scripture was Ps. lxxix. 22. He said this that He might suffer the further torment of being offered the vinegar. As S. Augustine says, "Ye have not yet done this. Give Me that which ye are yourselves—for ye are full of acidity and bitterness; give Me vinegar, and not wine."

Christ thirsted, because He had neither eaten nor drunken since His supper the night before, and He had moreover poured forth all the moisture and blood in His body, by His scourging and crucifixion. And His most bitter pains also caused Him great thirst; for, as S. Cyril says, "Sorrows enkindle the heat within us, dry up our moisture from its very depths, and burn us up with fiery heat." Hence our jaws are dried up, and are parched with thirst. The words of the Psalmist (xxii. 6) were fulfilled in Christ's person. The Chancellor of Louvain, when he was dying forty years ago, said in my presence, that he never fully understood those words, as he did when he was himself suffering from like drought and thirst, and thence learned how great the thirst of Christ was. Mystically, Christ thirsted for the salvation of souls. See Bellarmine on "The seven words of Christ on the cross." "God thirsteth to be thirsted for," says Nazianzen in *Tetrastichis*, in order that we may insatiably love and desire Him, and say with the Psalmist, "My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?" Ps. xlii. 2.

Ver. 30.—*When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.* All the suffering, and all the mysteries which the Father decreed from all eternity that I should suffer and carry out, as He ordered from My very birth, and willed, moreover, that the prophets should foretell concerning Me. There remains only the final issue of death, to complete My course of suffering, to expiate thereby the penalty of death, which Adam incurred by sin, and to restore mankind to life. I therefore embrace it, and resign My spirit into the hands of My Father. (Matt. xxvii. 48, seq.)

Christ spake seven words on the cross, three recorded by S. John, the four others by the other Evangelists.

Ver. 31.—The Jews therefore (because it was the preparation) that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the sabbath day (for that sabbath-day was an high day) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. See Deut. xxi. 22. This was done, in order that they might not pollute and make gloomy this most solemn festival, by the horror of their sufferings, as St. Augustine says. It was necessary therefore that they should die and be buried before sunset, at which time the sabbath began. "That," as Theophylact says, "the sun might not set on their sufferings."

sins, in the reed the hand-writing with which the devil had enrolled us as his own; for all these Christ took away by His Passion. He adds that when Christ took the reed, the devil armed him with a weapon against himself, for the reed is said to be fatal to serpents, and that Christ took the reed to deliver us from the serpent's subtilty.

Ver. 7.—*He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.* As being a blasphemer, sacrilegious, and opposed to God. S. Augustine says, "See here a greater charge. It seemed but a light thing that He had aimed at sovereign power: and yet He did not falsely claim anything; for He is the Only Begotten Son of God, and is King placed by Him on the hill of Sion, and He would now give proof of both, unless, the more powerful He was, the more patient did He choose to be."

Ver. 11.—Thou wouldest have no power against Me, unless it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin. The best explanation of this passage is that of Jansenius, Cajetan, and Ribera. Thou couldest have no power over Me, both because I am innocent, and because I could deliver Myself, if I so willed; But My Father willed that I should submit to thee, in order to the work of redemption, and accordingly permitted thee to give way to the Jews in this matter, and to exercise thy power over Me. But this thou wouldest not have done, unless they had accused Me. Their sin is therefore greater than thine.

Ver. 12.—*And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release Him.* He had sought to do so before. But he now more especially did so, after he had heard that He was the Son of God; fearing to incur the vengeance of God on condemning Him. The fear of Cæsar, however, prevailed over the fear of God. The Gentiles reckoned many sons of the gods, whom they worshipped as demigods. See S. Cyril in loc.

Ver. 13.—*In a place that was called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew Gabbatha.* That is a High Place, the seat of judgment, being raised on many steps. These steps were sent to Rome, and placed near the Church of S. John Lateran. They are much revered by the faithful.

Ver. 14.—*It was the preparation of the Passover.* That is of the Paschal Sabbath, the Sabbath which fell in the octave. On this day great preparations were made for the following Sabbath, on which no work could be done. This was the only Sabbath which had its preparation-day. The Greeks explain it as being the day before the offering of the Paschal Lamb. But according to the other Evangelists Christ was crucified on the day after the Passover, which S. John terms the day before the Paschal Sabbath.

About the sixth hour.

1. That is, says the Arabic version, six hours after sunrise. S. Mark says it was the third hour. Some consider that S. John should here be corrected by S. Mark. But all the MS. and versions read “the sixth hour.”
2. S. Jerome (on Ps. lxxvii.) thinks that S. Mark should be corrected by S. John. But here all the MS. of S. Mark agree in reading the *third* hour.
3. Euthymius (on Mark xv.) thinks that S. Mark mentions the third hour, because it was at that hour that the Jews demanded His death. But to demand His death, and actually to crucify Him, are very different things.
4. S. Augustine says that it was the sixth hour from the time that Jesus was preparing for death, *i.e.*, the ninth of the previous night. But this is a somewhat “violent” mode of solving the difficulty (*see S. Aug. in loc. in Ps. lxxiii. and de Consens. Evang. iii. 13*); and he says himself—
5. That it was in the third hour in the Jewish language, but at the sixth hour in the Latin tongue, and in Pilate’s sentence.
6. It was at the end of the third hour, and at the beginning of the sixth, the Roman and Jewish hours or watches being three of ours.
7. Ribera thinks it probable that at the *third* hour Pilate yielded to the clamour of the Jews, but that at the sixth hour the formal sentence was passed. S. Mark indicates the preparation for crucifixion, S. John the completion and carrying out of the sentence.

Ver. 15.—*We have no king but Cæsar.* “They rejected the Lamb, they preferred the fox,” to be their king, says Cassiodorus, See Luke xiii. 32, “Go ye and tell that fox.”

Ver. 17.—*Bearing His cross.* After the Roman custom. Augustine writes, “A noble spectacle: a great jest for the ungodly, but a great mystery to the godly; a great mark of disgrace to the wicked, a great evidence of faith to the godly; ungodliness, as it looks on, laughs at a King bearing His cross of punishment instead of His sceptre: while the godly behold a King bearing the cross on which He was to be nailed, and which He would afterwards fix on the brows of kings; scorned in the eyes of the ungodly for that very thing in which the hearts of the saints would thereafter glory.” Gal. vi. 14.

Ver. 23.—*But His coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.* Euthymius says it was said to have been woven by the Blessed Virgin.

Allegorically. This was a type of Christ’s Church, which it is not lawful to rend, and thus cause a schism.

Tropologically. S. Bernard regards it as the Divine image, so implanted and impressed on nature that it cannot be torn asunder.

Ver. 25.—*But there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister (cousin), Mary the wife of Cleophas (and the mother of S. James the Less and Jude), and Mary Magdalene, who was the more enkindled with love for Jesus, when*

like character).

Ver. 27.—*Then saith He to His disciple, Behold thy mother!* Love her, attend to her, help her, as thy mother. And, on the other hand, betake thyself to her, as thy mother in every difficulty, temptation, persecution, and affliction. She will cherish thee with motherly affection, will console and protect thee, and ask help for thee from her Son. And, these words of Christ are not mere lip words, and without effect, like those of men: but as the words of God they are real and efficacious, and effect that which they declare. And accordingly they impressed on S. John a filial affection and spirit towards the Blessed Virgin, as though she were his mother. Theophylact exclaims, “How wonderful! how doth He honour His disciple, in making him His brother? How good is it to stand by the cross, and to abide close to Christ in His sufferings!” And S. Chrysostom: “What honour does He confer on His disciple! For when He was about to depart He left the care of His mother to His disciple. For when it was natural for her to sorrow as His mother, and to seek for protection, He most fitly commends her to His beloved disciple, to whom He says, ‘Behold thy mother!’ that so they might be bound together in love.”

Behold thy mother! And the mother also of thy fellow-Apostles. Accordingly all the faithful (as S. Bernard teaches) should betake themselves to her with full confidence and love. She is the Eve of the faithful, the mother of all living, to whom the wise and Saints of every age betake themselves. Hear S. Augustine: “When He said these words, these two beloved ones ceased not to shed tears; they were both silent, for they could not speak for excessive grief; these two virgins heard Christ speaking, and saw Him gradually dying: they wept bitterly, for they sorrowed bitterly, for the sword of His sorrow pierced through both their hearts.”

And (i.e., therefore, because Jesus had ordered it) that disciple took her unto his own (sua). Some read *suam*, his own house, as Nonnus. paraphrases it. Bede suggests, for his own mother, or better still, into his own charge. As S. Augustine says, “not into his own hands, but into those kind offices, which he undertook to dispense.” S. John accordingly took her with him to Ephesus, and the Council of Ephesus (cap. xxvi. Synodical Epistle) says that they both for a time lived at Ephesus. (*See Christopher Castro in Hist. Deiparæ.*)

This then was Christ’s testament, and John was the executor. As S. Ambrose says on Luke xxiii., “He executed His testament on the cross and John witnesses to it, a fitting witness for so great a testator.” Gather from this also that Joseph was dead. As S. Ambrose says (*ibid.*), “The wife would not be divorced from her husband, but she who veiled the mystery under the guise of marriage, now, when this mystery was finished, no longer had need of wedlock.” And Epiphanius (*Her. lxxviii.*) says, “if she had had a

who had hitherto held the place of father and husband.” He then meets a tacit objection. "Joseph would have had good reason to object to this arrangement of Christ had he regarded himself as a husband in the flesh. But because the mystery of that union was spiritual, he allowed John to be preferred to himself in this office, as being more worthy, and more especially because the Master’s choice had so ordered it.”

This rests on the supposition that Joseph was then alive. But most commentators, and with greater probability, think otherwise. For no mention whatever is made of him, and Christ seems to have commended His mother to the care of John, because Joseph was dead. For had he been alive, Christ would certainly have committed His mother to his care, as He had done at His Incarnation and Nativity, and as having had experience of his fidelity and care in the flight into Egypt, and at other times.

Fourthly, John alone remained fearlessly and firmly with Mary at the cross, amidst all the insolence and reviling of the Jews. He therefore deserved to be adopted by Jesus as His brother, and to be put in His room as the son of the Virgin Mother. Moreover, Christ commended, in the person of S. John, the rest of the Apostles, nay all the faithful, to His mother, especially those who are chaste and virgins, and follow most closely Christ on His Cross, and thus become most beloved and most closely joined to Christ, just as was S. John, who was called by [Pseudo]-Cyprian His chamber-fellow.

Whom He loved. To whom He exhibited greater external tokens of love, as being younger than the other Apostles, more modest and chaste, and loving Him more than did the rest.

Woman, behold Thy Son! He calls her woman, not mother, “lest that loved name should wound the mother’s heart,” as Baptist of Mantua says: not to rouse the Scribes and Pharisees against her; to show that He had put off all human affections, that He resigned all human relationships, and wished to teach their abandonment; and lastly, to arouse her courage and strength of mind to bear all these things with fortitude, and to remind her of that resolute woman whom Solomon had foretold (Prov. xxxi. 1). For the Blessed Virgin suffered for a longer time than Christ. His suffering ceased at His death. Her suffering and compassion increased more and more. For she received His body when taken down from the cross, thus reviving her grief; and for the three days He lay in the tomb, His sufferings on the cross, which she had witnessed close at hand, remained vividly impressed on her mind, and gave it pain, till Christ rose again, and removed them all by the consolations and glory of His appearing. Again, the Blessed Virgin was left behind Him, to be the mother of the Apostles and the faithful, to gather them together again, to comfort the afflicted, to support the stumbling, to advise the doubting and anxious, and through all trials direct, instruct, and animate them.

This Cornelius illustrates from various ecclesiastical writers. He quotes also the very strong expressions used towards B.V.M. in the Litanies of the Church. And much stronger language of S. Bernard (*Serm. iv. de Assumptione*, and *Hom. iv. on the text “Missus est”* (Luke i. 26), and *Hom. ii. on Pentecost*, and several other passages of the

she saw Him washing away with His Blood those very sins which she had just washed away with her tears. Christ wished it so to be, that He might suffer the more by witnessing the sorrows of His mother, and that she by sharing His sufferings might give us a perfect example of patience and charity: as Damascene says (Lib. iv. 13), “The pangs of child-birth which she escaped she suffered at the time of His Passion, by her motherly compassion, bearing Him afresh in beholding His wounds.” For the holier she was, and the nearer to Christ, the larger was the cup of suffering which He offered her. Euthymius states that she stood quite close to the cross, her ardent love overmastering her fear of the Jews. She stood therefore firm and erect in her body, more erect in her mind, looking and wondering at this great mystery of godliness, God hanging on the cross. Hence Sophronius (*S. Jerome. Serm. de Assump.*) calls the Blessed Virgin a martyr; nay, more than a martyr, “Because,” he says, “she suffered in her mind. Her love indeed was stronger than death, because she made the death of Christ her own.” And S. Ildephonsus (*Serm. ii. de Assumpt.*), “She was more than a martyr, because there was in her no less love than sorrow. She was wounded with a sword within, for she stood prepared, though the hand to smite her was wanting. And she was rightly more than a martyr, for, wounded with overpowering love, she witnessed His death, and in her inward grief she bare the torture of the Passion.”

S. Anselm (*de Excell. Virg. cap. v.*) says, “Whatever cruelty was inflicted on the bodies of the martyrs, was light or rather nothing in comparison with thy suffering, which in its very immensity pierced through to the inmost parts of thy most tender heart And I could not believe that thou couldst endure such cruel tortures without losing thy life, unless the spirit of life itself, the spirit of consolation, the spirit of thy most loving Son, for whose death thou wast then in torture, taught thee within that it was not death that was destroying Him, but rather a triumph which was bringing all things under Him, which thou didst behold when He was dying in thy sight.”

S. Bernard (*Lamen. B. Maria*) says, “No tongue can speak, nor mind imagine, how the tender feelings of the Virgin were affected with sorrow. Now, O Virgin, thou payest with interest that natural suffering which thou hadst not in childbirth. Thou didst not feel pain at thy Son’s birth, but thou sufferedst a thousand-fold more at His death.” S. Mechtildis relates a vision in which she saw a seraph saluting the Blessed Virgin on account of the great love she had to God above all other creatures, which was especially manifested in the Passion of her Son, when she kept down all her human feelings, and rejoiced that He was willing to die for the salvation of the world.

John Gerson (*in Magnif.*) says that she manifested the highest obedience in offering up her Son to the Father, conforming herself therein to the Divine will. He compares her to the mother of the Maccabees, to S. Felicitas, and

to S. Symphorosa, who encouraged their sons to suffer martyrdom for the faith.

S. Bridget describes the intense grief of the Virgin (*Revel. i. cap. 10, 27, 25 and iv. cap. 23 and 70*). His "sorrow was my sorrow," she said, "for His heart was my heart."

Adrichomius (*Descript. Jerusalem*) mentions the exact spot where she stood near the cross, a spot now much honoured (he says) by the pious veneration of the faithful.

A question is here discussed whether the Blessed Virgin reasoned at seeing her Son on the cross. Authorities are given on both sides, the greater part maintaining that she did not, grounding their opinion on her entire conformity to the Divine will, and her own constancy and resolution, suffering rather in her mind than in her senses and feelings.

Salmeron (*Lib. x. tract. 41*) thinks that she swooned at first, and then recovered and stood by the cross: and that her swoon did not deprive her of her reason, but took away her senses for a while. He adds that she suffered thus of her own accord, to testify to men her exceeding love for Him, and her exceeding sorrow. Just as Christ voluntarily underwent His agony in the garden. Both had perfect control over their feelings, just as Adam had before he fell.

S. Ambrose (*de Instit. Virginum*, cap. vii.) thus writes, "The mother stood before the cross, and when men fled she remained intrepid. See whether the mother of Jesus could put off her modesty, who put not aside her courage. She looked with loving eyes on the wounds of her Son, through whom she knew that the Redemption of all men would come. She stood, no ignoble spectacle, since she feared not the murderer. The Son was hanging on the Cross, the mother offered herself to the persecutors, as not being ignorant of the mystery, that she had borne one who would rise again." And S. Athanasius: "Mary stood most firmly and most patiently in her faith in Jesus. For when the disciples fled, and all men held aloof from Him, to the glory of the whole of her sex, amidst the countless sufferings of her Son, she alone remained firm and constant in her faith, and indeed was a beautiful sight, as became her Virgin modesty. She did not disfigure herself in the great and bitter sorrow. She reviled not, she murmured not, she asked not from God for vengeance on her enemies. But she stood as a well-disciplined modest virgin, most patiently, full of tears, immersed in grief."

She was indeed so strengthened on beholding the blessed wounds of her Son as to be ready, says S. Ambrose (*in Luke xxiii.*) herself to die for the salvation of the world. For in faith, strength, and warmth of charity she was not inferior to Abraham, who was willing at God's command to offer up his son Isaac with his own hand. Besides this, her sure belief in His resurrection alleviated her sorrow and strengthened her resolution. She knew that He would rise on the third day.

Ver. 26.—When Jesus therefore saw His Mother, and His disciple standing by whom He loved, He saith unto His Mother, Woman, behold thy son! Christ pierced her heart with the wound both of love and sorrow, for He meant, Mother, I am, as thou seest,

dying on the Cross: I shall not be able to be with thee, to attend to thee, to provide for thee, and assist thee as I have hitherto done. I assign to thee, in my place, John to be thy son; a man in the place of God, a disciple for a master, an adopted son instead of thine own by nature; in order that he, as a virgin, and most beloved by thee as the Virgin Mother of God, may bestow on thee all the solace, and all the devotion, which both thy dignity and thy advancing age demand, and which the zeal and love of John promises and assures to thee. Christ therefore here teaches that children should care for their parents even to the last, says Theophylact from S. Chrysostom. Hear S. Augustine: "Here is a passage of moral teaching. Our good Teacher instructed His own by His own example, that pious children should have a care for their parents; as if that wood on which His limbs were fastened when He was dying, were also the chair of the teacher." For, as S. Cyril says, "We ought to learn from Him, and through Him, first of all, that parents must not be neglected, even when intolerable sufferings are hanging over us." "But wonder, with Theophylact, at the calmness with which He does everything on the cross; caring for His mother, fulfilling prophecies, promising paradise to the thief; but before He came to it, how burdened was He, pouring forth His sweat, and full of trouble." For, as Euthymius says, "in the one case the weakness of nature was seen, in the other His great power of endurance." Christ commends His mother to S. John, whom at the same time He put in His own place as her son, that thus they might have a mutual care for each other. [Pseudo]-Cyprian (*De Passione Christi*) gives the reasons for this. First, to provide for His mother, who was now waxing old, the care and kind offices of a son. As if He said, "I am dying. I cannot care for thee any more, I resign thee into the hands of John."

Secondly, that He might commend a Virgin to a Virgin. "The pure is entrusted to the pure," says Theophylact. As Nonnus paraphrases it: "O Mother, thou lover of virginity, behold thy virgin son; and on the other hand He said to His disciple, O thou lover of virginity, Behold a virgin who is thy parent, without giving thee birth." And S. Ambrose (*de Instit. Virgin*) says, "But with whom should the Virgin dwell, rather than with him, whom she knew to be the heir of her Son, and the guardian of her chastity?" And in this matter Jesus, as anxious for her purity, wished that her continuance in this state (as a mother and yet a Virgin) should be fully proved. As S. Ambrose writes (*ibid.*), "that no one should cast on her the reproach of having lost her purity."

Thirdly, To show that Joseph was not His father, He set him aside, and put John in his place. Hear [Pseudo]-Cyprian: "Thou carefully providedst for her who was Blessed among women, the protection of an Apostle, and Thou deliverest the care of the Virgin to a Virgin-disciple; in order that Joseph might be no longer burdened with the charge of so great a mystery, but that John should bear it. For reason now demanded that he should no longer be regarded as her husband, nor be counted the father of Christ,