

# Look It Up In The Book

## Thoughts on ‘Sin’

By Rev Robert Nash, S.J.

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I.

That’s what you remember being told in your school days. As with wrinkled brow you ploughed your way through a passage of Father Peadar Ua Laoghaire’s (Peter O’Leary’s) Irish (Gaelic) classic novel, “Seadna” and came upon an unfamiliar word, your excellent teacher did not allow you to slur over it and merely hazard a guess as to its meaning. No, he rightly insisted that you should fix that word in your mind by turning to your dictionary or to the vocabulary at the end of the volume and discovering for yourself what it meant. “Look it up,” — that was the slogan which most of us, I suppose, who have ever tried to learn a language can recall. And if you failed to recognise the same word when you happened upon it another day and in another context your inexorable teacher would refuse point blank to help you out. He knew the value of finding it again for yourself, so once more there was nothing for it but to obey the order echoing throughout the classroom and “look it up in the book.”

I know a small word, — a monosyllable indeed, consisting of only three letters, — and I think most of us will agree that its meaning is fast passing into the land of vague and distant memories. This is not because the word is un-important. To tell the truth there are few words more necessary to keep before our minds. So it will certainly be worth our while looking it up again, even if we happen to be among the few who still are mindful of its full significance. Presently we shall see where to find the book, but first you will want to know what is the word itself. Our enlightened world, while rightly it prides itself on its progress and its knowledge in other spheres, has grown deplorably ignorant and forgetful of the definition of sin.

Must I prove it? Well perhaps you listened-in the other night to that play? It was a funny play all right and evoked a good laugh. Granted. But when you begin to think over the plot, you find that it all turned on a clever bit of robbery. There were lies as plentiful as blackberries in October. There were false oaths sworn in court. The hero of the piece came out smiling at the end having carried through his scheme to enrich himself handsomely. But it happens that to steal and do business by underhand methods is forbidden by God’s Law. To perjure oneself is, in His eyes, a most heinous crime. But your playwright takes it for granted that neither you nor his principal character are going to allow such a trivial circumstance to weigh against the opportunity of turning over a goodly sum of ready cash. Sin has a nasty flavour, sin is a note that jars, so please let’s forget it and get on with our play!

Or examine off-hand many a film and find again the same easy readiness which leaves God out. You saw “Gone With The Wind”? Liked it? Couldn’t see any objection to it from a Catholic point of view? Recommended your friends to be sure to go? But did you not notice that it assumes that the

fittest place for the Ten Commandments is your waste-paper basket? Vices which Our Lord called by hard names are placidly condoned. The film smiles indulgently at the old-fashioned notions of morality and wonders that anyone takes them seriously nowadays. If the “new morality” of this age of enlightenment happens to clash with God’s Law who is so silly as to bother about that?

You will observe that there is rarely a frontal attack, only the assumption made that what God has set down as His Law no longer deserves mention, still less observance. And the most frightening truth about this portrayal of modern mentality is that it is the correct one. Moderns really do think this: ‘Sin doesn’t matter. Conscience is a bogey. Forget it. Everyone does in these times.’

I’ve taken just one film haphazardly but think over others you’ve seen and you are going to come to the same conclusion, — according to these modern icons — that we have outgrown the Ten Commandments in the gospel of the modern world, — if the mentality assumed in many of our films be an indication of the signs of the times.

Your spicy novel offends in just the same way. Often the writer won’t bother to direct his shafts straight against what you are taught as a Catholic. He will assume, once more, that God’s point of view doesn’t count. He will try to leave the impression, by an innuendo here and a half-truth there, that, while it is true that a few credulous Catholics still believe in and practise what Christ taught, the vast majority of men have outgrown His doctrines. You can’t have a good time and be a practising Catholic and what use is life if not to extract from it the maximum of pleasure and fun, or to surround yourself with abundance of the good things of the world? Anything else is sheer waste of time, loss of opportunity. Once given, that enjoyment is your *raison d’être* and automatically you laugh out of court Our Lord’s stern denunciation of sin. For, says your happy writer, what He calls sin is really the main avenue to a good time.

Once set before your eyes wealth and abundance as the goal of your existence and of course swindling and trickery become the most natural things in the world. No doubt, He condemned these things, but don’t let that bother you. Don’t you!

What’s the result of this insidious propaganda? Even Catholics are breaking away from their moorings. You will be told that sin is “only natural.” “Only natural” flagrantly to violate in most serious matters, a clearly expressed law of God. But everyone does it; can’t you gather as much from the screen and the thriller? You’re no worse than anybody else and you may as well join in the fun. It can’t be too bad, and anyhow God is merciful. Sentiment overrules reason and the teaching of our faith. The world subtly invites our sympathy with the husband who is unfaithful, or bids us admire the skill by which the crook makes a getaway, or sends us home laughing and amused at the forgeries by which the criminal evades the law. It does not take the trouble to add, — but rather takes quite a lot of trouble to omit, — that all this free-and-easy conduct is sin, mortal sin, an insolent disobedience on the part of a puny creature to do what he is ordered to do by his Lord and Creator. It never bothers to point out that there is a fearful sanction for that Law of God. If He be not obeyed here in this world from the motive of love, His justice will be vindicated by an eternity of punishment in hell.

Childish, sneers your smart modern. Old wives’ tales, hoary with age, dead as the dodo, or at least decaying fast and moribund. We’ve grown up, thank you.

How are we Catholics going to keep our standards of right and wrong? Or to reaffirm them for ourselves if they have begun to bend in face of the storm? Let us look up in the book and study once again for ourselves the correct definition. I saw the other day a striking picture of Saint Thomas

Aquinas kneeling before his crucifix. No doubt, you have at least some hazy notion of the colossal amount of work he did for Catholic Theology by his pen. Popes have vied with each other in trying to discover words that will adequately express the genius and the sanctity of this “perfect doctor and perfect saint.”

The picture I refer to illustrates the anecdote told about Thomas and his friend Saint Bonaventure. “Where, my brother” asked the latter, “do you learn so much? Whence do you draw all this wonderful doctrine?” And Thomas pointed to his crucifix. “That is my book. At His feet I learn it all.”

We might suggest that from the same book we could derive a correct definition of the meaning of sin. What Hollywood thinks of sin is not to the point, or what attitude is adopted by the writer of your modern best-seller. But what does Jesus Christ think of sin? How does He teach us its full significance? It will repay us, like Saint Thomas, to kneel down here at His bleeding feet and clarify our notions on the subject. The book is open wide before our eyes and all we have to do is to look and read. Every wound in that wracked body in front of us is like a tongue to answer our query.

Before we listen to those different tongues speaking, we have to let the truth first sink deep into the very marrow of our being that the Sufferer is God.

When sin is permitted to work out its malice in full, against a Victim Who is the Son of God, Calvary is the result, shocking us into realising that this is sin. “He was made sin,” says Saint Paul with his wonted vigour, implying that He was made its Victim. And here you have the result, — a sinless Son of God, writing with His blood the answer to the question we are pursuing. And remember too that He suffers thus for the sins of others, and puts to us that most searching question: — “If this be done in the green wood what shall be done in the dry?” Despite the metallic laugh by which your modern world dismisses it, sin must be indeed an evil the depths of which we never may hope to plumb, if Calvary is God’s way of bringing home to us its cruelty, its base ingratitude, its insolence, its insatiable hatred in pursuing its goal. Look it up in the book, the open book, the pages of which stretch across the broad expanse of this Hill.

What is sin? As you kneel here with the book spread out before you, you observe that there are nails in the feet of Christ, — a nail in His right foot and a nail in His left foot. If you ask what is sin, here is His first answer. Those two nails are, to all who read in this book, a warning of the price paid by Our Lord for sins committed by the feet. Men use their feet to sin, — how? What about those occasions of sin concerning which He constantly utters words of admonition? Men use their feet to walk into places of danger where their immortal souls are going to be seared with the guilt of grievous sin. There is that bar where you know you squandered your money, reduced yourself to the level of a beast, and came out in a state that left you in imminent danger of falling into other vices. There is that dark haunt where you hid yourself and your sin, from every eye, except His. What is sin? Suppose before going there you had looked in the book and contemplated those two nails in the feet of Christ, I wonder if you would so easily absolve yourself and assure yourself that your sin wasn’t any great crime.

Sins committed by the feet? Any qualms, as you kneel here before the pages of this open book, about your dancing? Has it been a cause of sin to yourself or to your partner? There were two feet pierced by nails to remind you of the malice of your action, and they were the feet of the Son of God. Never thought about it just that way, did you? Sins of the feet? Do you want to join in the walk to Calvary with those who on that day used their feet to follow Him jeeringly and call down

His Blood upon themselves and their children? You are doing it most effectively by failing to look up in the book and understanding the frightful ingratitude and malice of using your feet to go into places of sin.

From your position here at those bleeding feet lift up your eyes a little higher and, before the darkness falls, notice that that Body is naked. What an insult — The insult of insults — it must have been to the dignity of the Son of God!

But men must understand and women must learn the lessons of Christian modesty. No sane person expects girls today to dress as girls did in the days of good Queen Victoria. But at the same time, there is a limit and it behooves us, while kneeling here, to ponder well on the teaching of the Popes, and to remind ourselves how fiercely others might be tempted, and how readily they might succumb to grievous sin, because our Catholic girls failed to learn the need of reserve and restraint. One wonders if many excellent Catholic parents realise the harm they do by allowing their children, even little children, to depart from the standards of Christ in this matter and follow the lead of neo-paganism. Or if many excellent Catholic girls ever bring home to themselves the truth that, by their blasé attitude concerning dress they are permitting themselves to be a pawn in the devil's game to stir up men's passions.

These things need to be said, and said plainly, and if you doubt it ask sincere men who are trying to go straight and who admit the difficulty caused by the lack of Christian modesty on the part of girls, even Catholic girls, in the matter of dress.

Shortly after His death, the heart of Our Lord was pierced by a lance. Here too is a most moving answer to the question we are proposing to ourselves. The heart is the seat of the affections, and that open wound is a tongue crying out to warn all who gather here, about the heinousness of allowing the heart to be enslaved by unholy desires and unlawful loves. The married man who pays sinful attentions to the young girl typist in the office with him; the wife who allows her vanity to be flattered by the notice bestowed on her by the man across the street or by the man who calls to repair the window or to deliver those parcels, or leave his sales card in her doorway; the girl who knows perfectly well that she is a thief and a robber stealing from her employer, not his silver or his gold or his tea or sugar, but the love which he solemnly vowed before God's altar to give to another; — do these ask what is sin? There is an open wound in the Heart of Christ and it explains to them more eloquently than any theologian like Bossuet or Lacordaire, the true nature of the sin of those who allow their hearts to be beguiled by unlawful affections.

Yet a little higher, you raise your eyes and this time they rest upon His swollen lips and on a tongue that cleaves to the roof of His mouth. With that book open before you, can you any longer tell me that your foul and suggestive talk is a matter of no consequence? Look at His tongue and understand the pains He went to in order to make you realise the wickedness of sins done by the tongue. You have indulgent views about taking the Holy Name irreverently, have you? You don't attach much importance to that growing habit of criticising your neighbour harshly and broadcasting his faults, real or imaginary or exaggerated? You tell me that you had to swear that false oath; all round you, others were doing the same at that trial and if you didn't follow suit you stood to lose your whole case and perhaps a few hundred pounds to boot. So you had to take a false oath? You were compelled to call the all-holy God to bear witness that your lie was the truth! Jesus Christ went to His death, to this death, because He stood by the truth and refused to swerve from it

when solemnly adjured in court to answer in the name of the living God. That's how He spoke and here in death that tongue of His still proclaims the malice of all lying and perjury.

And the lips are parched and dried for He is undergoing an excruciating thirst. I wonder what those lips have to say to our sherry parties and cocktail gatherings if they lead to sin, especially mortal sin? Does this Catholic girl, as she laughingly raises that glass to her lips, ever pause and consider the lengths He went to in order to warn her of the terrifying possibilities of the habit she knows she is contracting? Is it sufficient justification to tell herself she must be a sport and do as well as the others? If when she wakes up next day, she is conscious that she degraded herself, does she even then look in the book and learn from those lips the true nature of her sin?

Or the man who squanders his money on drink and breaks his wife's heart and terrifies his little children, — would he ever be guilty of such insanity and such vice if he gave himself time to realise what drunkenness cost Christ on Calvary? Jolly companions will tell you be a sport at that dance, "decent" friends will take you by the arm to treat you to drink and to more drink. Do they and you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that His eyes follow you both reproachfully and define for you with a tongue that is parched and lips that are thickened and dry, the foulness of your deed? His lips and tongue speak loudly above the blare of music in that dance hall. They try to make themselves heard in the midst of the coarse jokes and inane shrieks of laughter and they refuse to be drowned by the cheap songs that fill the hotel saloon or the bar parlour on Saturday night. Do you ever hear them or listen to them as they tell you what is sin? And does the voice of Christ reach you at all, as He summons you to fulfil a sacred obligation next day. Your Sunday Mass? Or are you too sodden and stupefied as a result of your night's "fun" to get up in time?

What is sin? What is drunkenness? What is filthy talk, what are lies, and tale-bearing, and irreverence for the Holy Name, and uncharitable gossip, and suggestive stories and songs and false oaths? What are these things? Part and parcel of modern life? Nothing very much to grow excited about! Everyone does them! Isn't our callousness galling? Are we so blind that we cannot look up in the book and read what His lips and His tongue have to tell us?

The eyes of Christ, I see, are weighed down with blood and with spittle. And your eyes?

Ever use them to sin? Your reading? Quite all right? Not just a bit ashamed as you kneel here of that reeking volume you gloated over? And you passed it on, and another as a result feasted his or her eyes on the same cesspool? But it did you no harm; you can read anything. I wish it were in my power to credit that statement. But even if that was so, are you prepared to answer for the possible grievous sins of the other to whom you lent the book?

Sins with the eyes? What about that "show?" You sat there bolt upright with eyes glued to that screen or to that stage. What held you spellbound in this way? Here in the light of His all-seeing eyes have you the courage to wax eloquent about it as you did to your friends after it was over? Of course, everyone said it was a "great" show, a "splendid" picture, a "clever" plot. Bring it up here to Calvary. What does He think? Does He corroborate the opinion you voiced so loudly? His verdict is the only one that matters after all.

There are other ways of sinning with the eyes, but you can please learn their malice for yourself as you study the pages of this open book. No need to be more explicit but with His two eyes, now opened and looking straight down into the depths of your soul, you will have light to read and to understand what He thinks of vices so casually dismissed by a world that is forgetting the definition of sin.

What about sins of thought? Not a scrap harm in them, the modern world assures you airily Think as you please. The all-important rule is to “play the game,” avoid “getting caught,” preserve external deportment and conform externally to the usages of “good society.” But foster in your mind and heart all the depravity you wish for. Feast your thoughts on any subject that attracts you. Nobody is going to bother, for nobody sees what takes place in the secret places of your mind.

But on Calvary, I read very differently. He did not share these easy views, for I remember that He declared that if a man look on a woman with evil desire he has already sinned with her in his heart. And to enforce His lesson and make us read the correct definition He wears a crown on His head, a crown of thorns pressed into His temple and causing Him exquisite torture. And your mind? Your thoughts? I do not speak of all impure thoughts, for, God help us; in our present state of fallen nature, all such thoughts are impossible to avoid. But when the temptation grows strong to indulge deliberately in them, to sit back and allow their poison to saturate the mind, — then to look up in the book and see the crown of thorns must surely prove a warning and a deterrent against consent.

I have still to contemplate the ears of the dying Christ which were assailed with the cries of blasphemy and mockery. He would suffer thus for I have to learn the malice of using my ears to commit sin. So bend your ear, if you wish, to listen eagerly to that smutty story, but remember the price your sin is costing Him. Isn't it a sad commentary on our sinful condition that those ears of ours are always so ready to listen, time after time, to the same shady story? Tell a man a clean good joke today and repeat it tomorrow, and he will probably remind you that you told it before. It has lost its interest and its point when it has been heard once. But introduce a smutty story and it will be listened to and rehearsed time and time again. It will go on its rounds of devastating work, ruining the souls which Christ died for here on Calvary.

Sins of the ears? Yes, there are other chapters to be written under this heading, but once again, you will be able to read the meaning of them in the pages of the book.

Last of all I see that in Christ's hands, as in His feet, there are two nails holding Him to the Cross. Stretch out your own hands and look at them. Did you ever use those two hands of yours for sinful purposes? You think yourself smart because you rake in money with them. But how do you secure your hold upon it? Black market or under-handed dealings? Taking advantage of a poor man's necessity to overcharge? Everyone is doing it so why not you? Using your hands to sell drink over your counter to men or women who have already had too much? You are co-operating in their sin, aren't you, by using your hands in this manner? If that man commits mortal sin tonight, how are you going to answer for your share in his crime? If he falls into a drain on the way home, or is knocked down and killed by a passing lorry, if he is incapable of getting up for Mass tomorrow, Sunday, will it be quite in order to acquit yourself by the bland assurance that it is his own fault?

Sins committed by the hands? Copying out filthy yarns in writing and circulating them? Encouraging others to do the same? And that in full view of the two nails that pierced the hands of Christ on Good Friday? “O senseless Galatians, who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been set forth, crucified among you?” (Galatians 3:1).

Look it up in the book, the correct definition of sins of theft, of co-operating in another's sin, of dishonest dealings, or deeds of impurity. Once again, the modern world looks amusedly and makes merry over these things. But it cost Jesus Christ the Son of God this price to set thus before your eyes the correct definition.

At this point, I would wish you to stop reading and close this pamphlet. The second part will hold for another occasion. But meantime? Meantime, I wish you would kneel down, take out your crucifix, and study each of the answers to our query. Look it up in the book, the true definition of sin, especially grievous sin. If you give yourself a chance to kneel thus for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, slowly pondering on each of those wounds, I think you will learn what sin means. Touch those two nails in His feet, — what is their lesson? Consider the poor naked body, — how does His nakedness help to completing our definition? His heart is pierced, — why? His tongue is swollen, His tongue parched with thirst, His eyes are heavily laden with blood and spittle, — what does all this do towards clarifying our notion of sin? There is a crown of thorns, there are nails in His hands — look at them, feel them, let them speak to you. And they all unite in proclaiming that there is one evil in this world, one only evil from which, as from a running sore all other evils emanate, and sin is its name.

Stay here as long as you like, the longer the better, for no matter how long and carefully you ponder over those wounds and disfigurements in Christ's Body you will never probe the depths of malice and abomination of sin. But look it up in the book, and keep looking. Efface for the moment every other image except that of Christ crucified and He will shed light into your mind and you will begin to see. Sin, and mark especially that it was the sin of others, reduced the Son of God to this pass. Do not be in a hurry to pass on. Let the truth sink into your soul. Men sin because they do not think, because they do not give themselves time to learn their definition. When next you are tempted to sin, as tempted you surely will be, bring this open book before your eyes, stop dead and look at it for three minutes. Mary stands under the Cross and points out the wounds and disfigurements in her divine Son's body. You know what they mean now, don't you? And are you going to rush headlong, reckless of consequences, into that place of sin? Or, heedless of His warnings and pleadings are you prepared to seek out once more that sinful companion? God forbid!

Saint Vincent de Paul was trying, without success, to bring back to God a notorious sinner. His pleadings and warnings alike fell upon deaf ears. One day the saint brought him a large crucifix and made a bet with him. He challenged the sinner to place the crucifix on his mantelpiece and look steadily at it three times a day for a week, and to say slowly and deliberately each time: "I don't care." Yes, to be sure, the sinner would take on the bet, — and win. But he lost. After three days, he returned to Saint Vincent. "Father, you win. I can't do it. I do care. Beg Him to have mercy upon my sinful soul."

## II.

There are few acts possible for you to do which will be more appreciated than to show sympathy with a mother who loves and whose son is dying or in pain. At such a time, her heart will beat faster with gratitude if you express your grief, and more especially if your expression translates itself into deeds on his behalf.

Now "there stood by the cross of Jesus, His Mother." We have already spent some time with her here, and in her company, we have pondered on each of His wounds, each of His sufferings, and have compiled from them the true definition of sin. That is much, but so far, we have read down through only one side of the volume. The page on our left hand defines sin. What is there for us to learn from the page at our right? Mary points now to this second page, and as we peruse it, she tells us how we are to undo the malice of evil, how to help her and Him to roll back the great tidal wave of sin that is inundating the world and engulfing the souls of men. In other words, she tells us that

on this next page we find out how to sympathise. The word “sympathy” is derived from two Greek words which mean, “suffering with” a person. Now the Passion of Jesus on Calvary is the weapon which He, being Who He is, knew to be the most effective to destroy the sad effects of sin. Calvary therefore instructs us, not only as to the real nature of sin but also as to the method of warfare to be employed against it.

This is why Saint Paul cried out that he would “fill up in his flesh” what was wanting to the Passion of Christ. He was part of Christ’s Mystical Body, and accordingly what Christ endured he too must endure in his measure. And the generous desire to extend the fruits of the Passion thus, is the motive underlying the lives of those who read diligently in the book. Our divine Lord atoned abundantly for sin and merited all graces. But, in order that the fruits of His Passion be produced in men, our co-operation is needed after we have come to the use of reason. In regard to ourselves, we must “die to sin and live to justice.” In regard to others, we must, in Our Holy Father’s words, “restrain this mortal body by voluntary mortification.” So, with Mary, those who love Our Lord look once more in the book, and once more, they derive knowledge as to ways and means.

Yes, they see that He suffered in His feet. Those feet which walked the hard ways of life in search of the sheep that were lost can walk no more now. Do you want to show genuine sympathy? Use your feet to continue the journeys He began. Walk into the slums and alleys and bring Him souls. Walk to the Church for early Mass and Holy Communion and offer your steps for the conversion of sinners. His feet are suffering. The generous apostle will be weary and footsore too but weariness is his delight for by it he fills up something of what is wanting to the sufferings of Christ.

The body of Christ is wracked with pain. The body of Christ is cold. The body of Christ lies here on Calvary in a position calculated to cause Him excessive agony. And once again, the apostle finds here his inspiration and his model. His body too must suffer in atonement. As an antidote to the pleasure-seeking, comfort-loving world about him the apostle will, with Christ, hang on his cross and make his body feel the smart of pain. Jesus can suffer no longer in His physical body, but the true apostle cannot sit and watch Him and then go his way and forget. If that innocent body goes through this anguish to save souls and repair the damage wrought by sin, the lesson is very clear, — that only by voluntary suffering can the Passion be continued and souls won from the thrall of Satan. That is why you find generous souls who are fired with a longing to fast, to make their bodies feel pain, to spend their energy and wear out their bodies in toil which they joyfully undertake, urged as they are by their craving to be like Him. The pain, which wracked His body here, is continued by many a patient sufferer on his bed of sickness.

The spear pierced His side and opened His Heart. And your heart too must be opened wide if you would be His apostle. On our first page, He showed us how men sin by allowing their hearts’ affections to go astray. But this time the open Heart of Christ challenges the apostle to embrace in his heart the souls of all men without exception. The pure love of Christ must continue to pour itself out on men’s souls, and the apostle accordingly must keep his heart close to Christ’s Heart and fill it from this source. In this way, “that open Heart, a treasure-house of divine generosity, will pour out on us torrents of mercy and of grace, and that Heart which never ceased to burn with love for us will be opened to the saintly as a place of rest and to penitents as a secure haven of refuge.”

Do you remember the lesson on our first page drawn from those eyes of Christ? This time as the apostle kneels here, he understands that his eyes too, he must use to expiate sin. You will often find him on his knees keeping vigil with his eyes fixed upon the Tabernacle. You will discover a



kindliness in the expression of those eyes which reminds you of the look from Christ that broke Peter's heart with sorrow, or of the affection for His friend which filled those eyes of His with tears at the grave of Lazarus.

The lips of the apostle he will consecrate here too, to the sacred work of filling up in his flesh what is wanting to the sufferings of Christ. Those lips will often move in prayer; they will champion Christ's Cause; they will speak out fearlessly against His enemies; they will attract by the sweetness of their charitable utterances, even as the words that fell from His lips drew men after Him irresistibly. Men sin indeed with their lips, but generous souls will seal their lips in perpetual silence and, hidden away in monasteries and secluded places, will offer their silence in reparation and thus fill up what is wanting.

Jesus wore a crown of thorns and it has taught us much already. But it has yet another inspiration for the apostle. His mind? How can he use it in the work of atonement? There are men today who offend God grievously by misusing the gift which makes them most God-like — their intellect. There are men whose minds revel continually in those foul thoughts we read of, on page one. But that very fact lends wings to the determination of the apostle who wants to give practical sympathy. There are men too, thank God, and many of them who have consecrated brilliant intellects to the cause of truth, who have written valiantly in its defence. There are men and women around about us and they are ever occupied in their minds with one only problem — how to bring God to souls and souls to God.

From such consecrated minds have sprung organisations like Mary's Sodality, which, for four hundred years has been, with unwearied patience fashioning souls to high sanctity and sending them into the field of Catholic Action to inflame the souls of others. From such intellects evolved, just one hundred years ago, the great Apostleship of Prayer — a tiny mustard seed at first, sown in the obscurity of a Jesuit classroom and behold, its branches have spread till they have become co-terminous with Christianity. From minds that have studied with minute care the mind of Him Who is here wearing His crown, have come forth the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, and in our own days, the world-wide Legion of Mary. Thank God that, if there are men and women whose minds are steeped in sin, there are others which are luminous, and whose brightness is kept alive by contact with the mind of Christ on Calvary.

And, apart from these there are others too whose minds are full of divine light. Not all who drink in the ideas and ideals of Christ are endowed with the power to organise great works or to write in His defence. None the less, they are a source to Him of consolation, and by a hidden apostolate of prayer and suffering, they exercise an influence over souls which may very well far exceed the influence wielded by those in more prominent positions. For them He has not worn His crown in vain. They too have looked in the book and learned well the thoughts that lie hidden in that divine mind. Beyond all question they too are filling up what is wanting to the sufferings of Christ.

His ears had to listen, on that day, to jeers and taunts, and many men still use the gift of hearing to offend Him. But the apostle will consecrate this gift to His service. He will close his ears to uncharitable talk and gossip, but he will open them wide to hear, with Christ-like sympathy, the story of sorrow or of shame. You will find him generous with his time whenever he comes upon trouble of mind or body, for Jesus was like that, and the apostle must continue to be, as it were, Jesus over again! An ideal so exalted as to be never attainable, but he will keep trying. So his ears

he will use to listen as Jesus listened and to deafen when he recognises that Jesus too would have deafened His ears in similar circumstances.

What can the apostle do with his hands to press them into Christ's service? Christ's own hands are nailed to the cross today, but time was when they were roughened with toil, time was when they were employed to touch healingly, time was when they rested lovingly on the heads of innocent children, or busied themselves to wait on His disciples, or wash their feet, or cook their meals. These things the hands of Christ can do no longer now, for in the right hand, there is a nail, and in the left hand, there is another. But the hands of the apostle can be consecrated too, and they in turn can become, as it were, the hands of Christ.

So the apostle learns to "apostolise" the tying of a parcel or the washing of a dish. He understands when using his hands to attend to the needs of that sick, and possibly ungrateful and exacting patient, that he is continuing the apostolate of His Master and Model. If he earns his living by breaking stones or digging in a bog, he knows that no labour is too menial to be sanctified since Christ toiled at a carpenter's bench. If a poor woman goes out to the wood to collect timber and bends wearily under her load on the way home, she remembers that His hands carried the cross and His shoulders bent lower still under its weight.

What can the apostle do with his hands? I read of sewing for the missions and making vestments. I hear of garments made for the poor of Christ. I know about meals cooked and given away by generous hands to those who are hungry and starving. I watch the hands of Christ's priest lifted in absolution over the penitent sinner. I look on those same hands raising for me to adore the immaculate Body that hung on Calvary, or exposing It for my veneration in the Monstrance. I think of the hands that guide the blind, the hands that open a door to the destitute or the fallen, the hands directing and protecting the early steps of childhood. Once more, if there are men who use their hands to sin, there are others who have learned from His hands the sublime lesson of supernaturalising everything they touch. It is not such a difficult lesson to master if only you look assiduously on the second page of this open book. And the lesson, when understood and practiced, has a wonderful power to elevate the most commonplace action to the plane of the super-natural.

A mother appreciates sympathy when her child is in pain or nearing death. Mary is standing here on Calvary, and, if you want to be sincere in your expressions of sympathy, read page two in the book. "There stood by the cross of Jesus, His Mother" — not only to teach you the correct definition of sin, but also to instruct you in the ways and means to combat it and free men from its slavery.

Another mother was watching at the bedside of her dying son. "Mother," he gasped, "water. I'm tormented with this thirst." And mother held the glass to his lips. At that moment, the clock struck three. "My son," she whispered, "it is the hour when Jesus died. He thirsted too." And the boy put the glass of water, untasted, back in the hands of his mother. I do not know which of them displayed the greater courage, for a mother's heart feels the pain endured by her son more than her own. But one thing I do know — both mother and son had mastered the second page and its lesson.

"Deep mystery this," writes our Holy Father, "subject of inexhaustible meditation — that the salvation of many depends on the prayers and voluntary penances which the members of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ offer for this intention . . . . This must be held, marvellous though it appear, that Christ requires His members. Heavenly gifts will surely flow more abundantly if we not only pray fervently . . . but if we also set our hearts on eternal treasures rather than on the passing things of this world, restrain this mortal body by voluntary mortification, denying it what is

forbidden, forcing it to do what is hard and distasteful, and finally humbly accept as from God's hands the burdens and sorrows of this present life. Thus according to the apostle, 'we shall fill up those things which are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in our flesh, for His Body which is the Church'."

### III.

Some twenty or twenty-five years ago a priest was seated at 'X' railway station waiting for the train to start. Presently, on looking out of the window, he saw, standing there on the platform, a peasant woman with shawl over her head and her husband by her side. Their son, aged nineteen, was leaning out of the carriage window.

The priest took in the situation at once. He knew that the young fellow was a ne'er-do-well who had brought disgrace on the heads of his decent father and mother, and who, as a result of his misdemeanours, was being compelled to leave the place.

Three or four minutes before the train whistle blew the poor mother broke down completely. She began to sob as if her heart was going to break. She turned up the corner of her check apron and leaned forward helplessly against the window of the train, holding the apron to her weeping eyes. The husband looked up and down the platform in a shy awkward way, evidently dreading a scene and wishing from his heart that the train would move off and put an end to this agony and suspense.

And then came the shock of horror to the priest who was watching it all. The young man proceeded to produce his own pocket handkerchief and actually began to mimic and ridicule the sobs of his broken-hearted mother. Not satisfied with having brought down in shame her grey hairs to the grave, not content with having repaid all her years of love with cruelty and crime, this boy now devises yet another insult. The last memory she will have of him, before the train takes him away from her, perhaps never to see him again, will be that when her heart had already more grief than it could well bear, he left her behind him with a mocking grin on his face and a cry of mimicry in his voice. No need to tell you that the priest was indignant and you too would have been perfectly furious at such an inhuman outrage. Think of it, — her own son, her own flesh and blood, with a heart, you would say, like a piece of granite.

What bearing has this anecdote on our theme? Perhaps you suspect, but if you turn for a moment to the second Book of Samuel, (or of Kings as we call it in the Vulgate,) your suspicions will give place to certainty. In the eleventh chapter of that book, you find the prophet Nathan telling David about two men, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had "exceeding many sheep and oxen, but the poor man had nothing at all but one little ewe-lamb." One day a friend called to see the rich man, and, in order to spare his own, he seized the poor man's one little ewe-lamb, killed it and cooked it to make a meal for his visitor.

David was furious and swore that the rich man should die, having first restored fourfold to the poor man, "because he did this thing and had no pity." But Nathan turned on the king and dumbfounded him by saying: "YOU are that man!" For David had sinned mortally, notwithstanding all the blessings heaped upon him by a loving God.

"You are that man." Stifle your indignation against that boy at the railway station and direct it against yourself. For, if ever you sinned mortally you jeered Christ hanging here on Calvary, "crucifying again the Son of God and making of Him a mockery." There are some, many thank God, who on reading this open book, are fired with the longing and noble resolve to fill up in their

flesh what is wanting to Christ's sufferings and we saw something about them on page two. But there were others that day who failed to understand, and on our last page of the book, we propose to trace the course followed by a man who can remain callous in full view of such love.

No man descends suddenly from the heights of sanctifying grace to the depths of habitual mortal sin. The process is a gradual one and its various steps may be illustrated in the story of the sickness and death of Lazarus by giving a metaphorical sense to the story.

The first fact we have about Lazarus is that he was "languishing."

{Footnote: It is plain from Our Lord's words that the "languishing" of Lazarus was his "sickness," and that his "sleep" was "death". But the Latin text uses a different word for each of these different stages — "languens"; "infirmatur"; "dormit," "mortuus est". This, I suppose, is the justification for the interpretation borrowed from the Fathers and given below.}

When a soul, hitherto full of earnestness and fervour and joyousness in God's service, now begins to experience a disgust for prayer and Sacraments and works of zeal, let that soul be on the alert to recognise in this repugnance, the first warning of possible disaster. Undoubtedly, there are times when even the saints felt this weariness in well-doing, and when the tendency waxed strong to give up all effort. But they reacted against it by forcing themselves to all the greater fervour, and by setting their faces like flint against the urge to ease off.

Let a soul yield to the opposite policy and at once, there is a lowering of the standard. Spiritual books become insipid, prayer is a bore, early Mass and Holy Communion are out of the question, although there were times when these would be secured at any price. And while all that concerns God's service is gone through in a mechanical and indifferent manner, the things that delight the senses are eagerly sought and never seemed more desirable. The soul is still a thousand miles from serious sin, but its fervour is gone and its delight in the Lord. It is the first step; Lazarus was "languishing."

Shortly afterwards Our Lord was told that His friend was "sick." "Lord, behold he whom You love is sick." And, quickly on the heels of the soul's languor comes a spiritual sickness. Prayers are now easily omitted altogether. There are frequent outbursts of bad temper. There is plenty of uncharitable talk and harshness and a peevishness that astonishes those who knew that man in the days of his fervour and now cannot fail to observe how sadly changed he has become. Well might we imagine the angel entrusted with the man's soul pointing him out to the Lord and declaring: "Lord he whom You love is sick!"

There is a third step downward. "Lazarus our friend," said Jesus, "is asleep." Let a man remain languid and pass thence to sickness of soul, and after a while he finds himself acquiescing in this unhappy condition. He is dull and irresponsible to the promptings of grace. Missioners come and perhaps he sits before them in Church but their message fails to stir him. He is asleep. A friend of the old days, with whom perhaps he often worked as a Sodalist or Legionary calls to see him and to encourage him to take up again some work for souls. But the friend goes home disappointed for he might as well have been speaking to a sleeping man. He no longer has any interest in these things for he is oppressed with drowsiness where they are concerned. For a while, he continues in this state of atrophy. But he cannot remain thus, for his heart craves for love to fill it. Since he has now no love for what is of God, there is nothing to be wondered at that he next descends another step, a perilous step. And what is it?

It is death. It is soul-murder. “Lazarus,” Our Lord declares, “is dead!” Too long did he dally with his tepidity and apathy; too readily did he turn to gratify himself by seeking a life of ease and effacing the memory of the cross. And, little by little, he has reached this terrible pass; he is dead, his soul is steeped in mortal sin. He has joined those who crucify again the Son of God and make of Him a mockery. And he can settle down to this frightful condition. Jesus found Lazarus four days in the tomb.

And when He found His friend thus and ordered the tomb to be opened, Martha, full of confusion, remonstrated. “Lord,” she whispered, “by this time he stinks!” And let a sinner persevere in his sinful ways and soon his life becomes a source of scandal to others. His words, his actions, the expression of his eyes, the appearance even of his face — all the man’s whole bearing somehow, bespeaks sin and sinfulness, and by his evil example he encourages others to sin, teaches them how to sin, laughs at their scruples, becomes a ringleader in shameful practices. All this is like the stench of the vices that are corrupting his heart and ruining his soul. Saint Catherine of Sienna used to know when a man in her presence had mortal sin on his soul for she suffered at such a time from the unendurable odour of his sins.

When Jesus came to the tomb “He groaned in spirit and troubled Himself. . . . And Jesus wept.” And here on Calvary He weeps too, and troubles Himself. Such a spectacle! The Son of God weeps over the sins that mutilate His work in man’s soul. In order to arouse the dead Lazarus, Jesus “cried out with a loud voice: ‘Lazarus, come forth’.” And he that was dead came forth, and Our Lord ordered him to be loosened and let go.

Look it up in the book — the terrifying descent which would lead you ultimately to league yourself with those who are crucifying Him here today. Here too He calls out with a loud voice, but even here, it is possible to stop one’s ears and blind one’s eyes. You are that man! Are you? If so your soul is buried in the tomb, but the loud cry will re-echo over Calvary. The dead soul will be quickened with life, and Jesus will order it to be loosened of the shackles that bind it. And behold once more it finds itself free!

“Imagining Christ our Lord present before me on the Cross to make colloquy with Him, asking what have I done for Christ, what am I doing for Christ, and what ought I to do for Christ. Then, beholding Him in such a condition, and thus hanging upon the Cross, to make the reflections which may present themselves.” So writes another man who looked long and lovingly at the pages of the open book. That picture which Saint Ignatius gives us at the close of his meditation on “Three Sins” has suggested the writing of this pamphlet. His book of Spiritual Exercises is a gold-mine from which we have tried to extract three precious stones.

These on examination shed light upon the meaning of sin, and the way to repair its ravages, and they warn us against the dangerous beginnings which might lead to ruin and collapse in our case as they did in the case of those who crucified Him. Because they shut their eyes to these truths men go on crucifying Him today. Because men open their eyes wide and read diligently in the book, they are filled with an irrepressible longing to make others read also.

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