

Devotion To The Holy Face

Of Our Lord Jesus Christ

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INTRODUCTION.

WE KNOW from the writings of the saints that all through the centuries, devotion to the Holy Face of Our Lord was practised in the Church. But it was in the middle of the last century, the nineteenth, that a fresh impetus was given to it.

A simple Breton girl, a seamstress in Rennes, where her father was a locksmith, entered the Carmelite convent in Tours, taking the name of Sister Saint Pierre (Saint Peter), and, though the years of her religious life were few, she died in the odour of sanctity. (She is known in many places as Sister Marie of Saint Peter.) Her writings, subjected to severe tests, scrutinised by theologians in commission, were found to be altogether free from error and to contain revelations and practical teaching that constitute a treasury of devotional literature. Her mystical experiences belong to the most elevated order of such heavenly communications, and her doctrine reaches sublime heights, only to be paralleled by the writings of the great Fathers of the Church, in which similar mysteries are dwelt upon in a similar manner – writings, it should be observed, with which our Carmelite was utterly unacquainted.

It was during the years 1845-46, shortly before her death, that Our Lord revealed His promises to her with regard to those who would honour His Holy Face. At that time, blasphemy, especially in speech, was rife in France, and, here it may be added, that the revelation of the "Golden Arrow" (see more at the end of this pamphlet) was, so to speak, the official beginning of her mission proper. The object of that mission was to procure the establishment of the Arch-confraternity of the Holy Face, an association of reparation for blasphemy and of adoration of the Face of God made Man.

Thus we find devotion to the Holy Face revealed quite suddenly to this humble lay sister at the close of her life.

Our Lord speaks to her of His Holy Face "as a celestial coin" entrusted to our spending. We are poor, and every day we plunge deeper into debt to God. We are weak, and cannot avail ourselves of mortification and much prayer; we have not a great deal to give in alms, that mighty source of blessings, and we need the lamp of Faith in the spiritual darkness of our modern world. Today no one will deny that dangers are more numerous than they were even thirty years ago. [Dear reader, this was written in 1938! How much greater are the spiritual dangers of today compared with those about which our author is anxious!] Our young people have harder things to face and more of them than their grandparents. Yet there is always the star of hope – none other than the kind, pitying Face of "the bright Morning Star" Himself. Is it not a sign of the times, a modern grace from the great Heart of Christ, that ours should be the days of frequent Communion? We need Him so much nowadays that He calls us to His Altar every morning of our lives. There is also devotion to the

Sacred Heart, the glory and fire of our age. The Sacred Heart was the object of Sister Saint Peter's special love, and to it, she owed the graces of the reparatory devotion to the Sacred Face of Christ.

The Holy Face defiled in the Passion is, as if it were, a personal bid made by Our Lord for our love. As Saint John of the Cross says: "The smallest act of pure love has a greater value in God's eyes than all good works put together. The slightest spark of that love is of the highest importance to the Church." Our Lord ardently longs to see us practise this love in our daily lives of work and worry. He wishes us to keep the memory of His tender, sympathetic Face ever looking with love on us, that Face once bruised and mocked for us. He promises His everlasting companionship and his ravishing smile in Heaven, in return for our loving attention to that suffering Face during the days of our earthly pilgrimage. Is it to be wondered at that He could promise the vision of His Face in Heaven to His devout lovers, seeing that He could promise a reward for even a cup of cold water given in His Name?

Every act of perfect love, like every supernatural act, entitles us in this life to an increase of sanctifying grace, and in Heaven to a ray of eternal glory. By multiplying our acts of love, we, at the same time, multiply our measure of light and happiness in Heaven. Did He not say to the adorers of His Face: "May the light of My Countenance be your everlasting gladness"? Even in this life, by our acts of love, we may become more and more the millionaires of Heaven. (Father Faber).

Every good act in our life, every look of love we give to the Face of our Unfailing Friend will deepen that sweet smile of welcome, which we hope to see on the Holy Face of Jesus at the hour of our death.

During the lifetime of Sister Saint Peter, there was also living in Tours another soul destined by Our Lord to be very closely connected with devotion to His Holy Face, and that was Monsieur Leo Dupont, commonly known as "the holy Man of Tours." [He can now formally be known as Venerable Leo Dupont.] Mr. Healy Thompson has translated the life of Monsieur Dupont, and it is a singularly interesting book, well worth reading, but only the merest outline of it can be given here.

Born in the West Indies in the beginning of the last century, he came to Paris to study. In his early manhood, he was remarkable as a dandy, outdoing all his friends in the elegance of his dress. He was the first to drive a Tilbury carriage in Paris: and to complete the picture, he had a small boy with arms crossed sitting in the back seat. This little boy (the "tiger") was to be the indirect means of Monsieur Dupont's conversion, not from a life of sinful dissipation, but from a life of frivolity.

One day he was to attend a fashionable wedding, but he waited in vain for his "tiger" to appear, while he impatiently drove his Tilbury up and down. Long after the time for the wedding, the boy turned up, excusing the delay by saying he had to attend a catechism class for first Communicants. Just to see if the excuse were valid, Monsieur Dupont drove at once to the church, and there, sure enough, he found the class going on. He listened for a while, and was so much struck by the contrast of his own life and that of the young priest, who seemed to be about the same age, and yet was giving his best days to teaching the waifs and strays of Paris, that at once he set about changing his way of living. His first act was to sell his Tilbury, giving the sum it realised to a poor family in distress. After some time, he thought of becoming a priest, but on consulting his confessor, he was advised to marry, which he did. His wife died after a few years, leaving him a baby girl, Henriette. He sent this child, when old enough, to be educated by the Ursulines in Tours, where his mother had been at school. But Henriette had never been strong, and, when about eighteen years old, she developed chest trouble, of which she died.

Monsieur Dupont was now free to devote his life to good works. Living in Tours, he got to know the Carmelites, of whom he became a devoted friend. He made the acquaintance of Sister Saint Peter, and both these holy souls had but one ambition – to spread the love of Our Lord broadcast and to repair all the sins committed against His Holy Name. The little Carmelite told him of Our Lord's revelations about His Holy Face, and Monsieur Dupont put up a picture of it in his drawing-room, and lit a lamp before it. One day a friend of his came to see him. She was suffering from a very painful disease, and, on leaving, she asked if she might take a little of the oil that was burning before the Holy Face. He gave his consent at once, and, when the lady used it, she was cured on the spot. This was the beginning of hundreds of cures of every kind, so that Monsieur Dupont's drawing-room became a place of public pilgrimage, and there, to this day, the Holy Face of our Divine Lord is very specially honoured. The foregoing facts bring devotion to the Holy Face down to our own time, and, wherever this practice is established, a greater personal love for Jesus Christ grows up in the heart and a strong desire to make Him reparation for one's own sins and those of the world. May Jesus Himself deign to bless these pages and to produce such wonderful results in the hearts of all those who read them!

Our Lord Makes a Bid for Our Personal Love.

SINGULAR among the great devotions in the Catholic Church, is that great devotion towards the Holy Face of our Divine Lord. It is most ancient, because it is contemporary with Our Lord Himself. It has flourished throughout the ages, under the care and zeal of the Supreme Pontiffs, and in our own times has seen a great development and a new outburst of fervour among the faithful, which have been witnessed to by many extraordinary miracles.

The devotion to the Holy Face is naturally linked with that of the Sacred Heart. The first worshipper of the Holy Face was our Blessed Lady at Bethlehem. She was also the first adorer of the Sacred Heart, and the one who, more than any other creature, has been able to gauge the immensity of its abyss of love. The first apostle of the Sacred Heart was Saint John the Evangelist, the apostle of love, who leaned his head upon the breast of Jesus at the Last Supper, and who in his Gospel has recorded for us the fact that when the Heart of Our Lord was pierced by the lance, there came forth blood and water: a prodigy so great that it can be only explained by the fact that Our Lord died, not of His torments, not of loss of blood, but of a broken heart. "He that saw has given testimony, and his testimony is true."

The first apostle of the devotion to the Holy Face was Saint Veronica, the fearless woman who, out of boundless love for our Divine Lord – a love that feared no injury, that braved all – insult and ridicule – met Our Lord on the Way of the Cross, and in the presence of the vast multitude of His enemies handed to Him the veil with which He wiped His adorable Face. That veil, wonderfully bearing the imprint of His features, and treasured by Saint Veronica during her life, bequeathed by her as a priceless legacy to the Bishops of Rome, and there treasured and venerated for centuries as one of the principal relics of Holy Church, is the centre of the great devotion of the Holy Face.

The human face reveals to us the soul and the personality of the individual. We speak of a man as having a degraded face, or a low and sinister expression, because habits of sin and cancerous vice have eaten away and corrupted that innocence and frankness which belonged to him in childhood and youth. In the same way, habits of virtue and holiness of life find expression in the faces of those who have really endeavoured to practise Christian perfection. While therefore the soul gives life to

the body, as a whole, it is the face, which expresses in a wonderful and peculiar way the dignity to which that soul has been raised by the grace of God, or the degradation to which it has descended.

The Incarnation is the concrete expression of the infinite love of God for us. By it the Son of God, dwelling eternally in the Bosom of the Father, took to Himself a human nature, and became a man among men, that we might understand more fully the immensity of the love that created us, and the love that was to redeem us. As Saint John, the apostle of Divine Love, tells us: "That which was from the beginning, we have heard, we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life." As the Sacred Humanity of Our Lord is the visible expression of His almighty, redeeming Love, so the Sacred Heart is at once the symbol and the treasure-house of that infinite Love, and His most Holy Face the expression to us of His infinite charity, His unfathomable pity, His inexhaustible tenderness, and His unfailing sympathy in all our hopes, our needs, and our manifold weaknesses.

In the Old Testament men beheld the majesty of Creation, the vastness of the heavens, peopled with innumerable stars, the grandeur of the sun and moon, the beauty of earth and sea, the unbroken silence of great mountains, the power of tempests; they knew all this to be but the fringe of the splendours of God's eternal majesty. They adored God in fear, on account of the sublime isolation of the Godhead, and were awed by the unbridgeable distance that separated the Creator from the things that He had made.

But the Incarnation revealed new and amazing aspects of God's love for men. The Babe of Bethlehem makes God easy to be loved, and all things easy to understand. The whole earth sings a new canticle: "Come, let us adore the Lord, because He is little and exceedingly to be loved." He is a little Babe, so helpless, so simple, so humble; one of the frail things of creation; and yet His Mother's knee is the throne from which He is ruling the vast universe that He has made, and it is His tiny hands that support the heavens.

The Incarnation makes the Love of God for each one of us easy to understand. It is the appeal of Our Lord to each of us for a real and personal love. We do not love all men alike. For some we have a special love, which is based on our knowledge and experience of their character, and of their goodness to us. We cannot help ourselves. Such is our nature, that it compels us to make friends, to love them, and to express our love for them in our actions. We rejoice to see the faces of our friends, and are comforted by their presence and take delight in their company.

The whole life of Our Lord on earth, and His bitter Passion and Death, His glorious Resurrection and triumphant Ascension are all an infinite appeal for a return of personal love. It was all the result of an infinite Love directed to each one of us. It was an expression of Divine Love translated into human words and actions. It was an attempt by Our Lord to win our individual and personal love on the same terms, and in the same way in which our friends win our love for themselves.

Our Lord displays to us, in an infinite degree, all those things, which are the foundations of human love. His Sacred Heart presents itself to us as the unceasing fountain of all that we can have or hope for, and as a vast abyss of tenderness and pity for us in all our difficulties and trials. And since so mighty a love must call forth a response from us, the Sacred Heart is the object of our personal love, and His most Holy Face, the face of our Friend of Friends, the object of our constant veneration and reparation.

The Holy Face of Our Lord the Centre of attack in His Passion.

From the account given us by the sacred writers, it is clear that, while the whole Body of Our Lord was insulted in every way that could be devised, His beautiful Face was singled out in a special manner for insults, humiliations and injuries. The Passion itself almost opens with the treacherous kiss of Judas, the sign of his betrayal.

The memory of this awful kiss brooded darkly over the Soul of Jesus during His Passion, and down through all the centuries, it has since filled the heart of the Church with horror and detestation. It has been our Lady's wonderful privilege to imprint maternal kisses upon the Holy Face. For three and thirty years, from the first time she beheld it, as the Face of her own little babe, it had been the object of her adoring love; she, beyond all others, understood that Face was the centre of the worship of the heavenly hosts. She knew the sanctity that surrounded its awful majesty. It was the Face of God. How heaven must have shuddered at the kiss of Judas!

The same horror begins to steal over our own hearts, so often hardened in sin, when we consider how extraordinary was the love of Our Lord for Judas. He had been one of the chosen twelve, predestined from all ages to be the intimate companion of Jesus in His public life: upon him, the graces of the apostleship had been heaped. Day after day, for three long years, he had listened to the words of Eternal Wisdom; he had lived and eaten and walked with Him who was the most lovable of men: time after time, he had been admonished with infinite tenderness for his growing vice of avarice: and, even when at last, he had determined to sell his Master and struck his bargain with the priests, who were thirsting for the blood of our Saviour, the love of the Sacred Heart for him did not falter. At the Last Supper, the final warning was given probably in the midst of the very institution of the Sacrament of Love. The washing of his feet by his divine Victim, the prophecies of the approaching betrayal, and lastly the morsel of bread dipped in the dish and given as a sign to him were the supreme and final efforts of Jesus to turn Judas from his unspeakable crime.

"And Judas went out into the night and it was dark." It was dark in the traitor's heart, from which the last glimmer of divine grace had faded away; and it was cold, for the last spark of love had died out. He would betray his Master and friend by no ordinary sign: he would not point with his finger to single Him out, or touch Him on the arm. No, he was one of the first to think of so vile a sign, and we know that ever since, the kiss of treachery is always spoken as the "kiss of Judas." Judas consummated and masked his baseness in the moment of supreme injury, by the supreme sign of friendship. "And he that betrayed Him had given them a sign, saying: 'Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is He: lay hold on Him and lead Him away carefully.' And when he was come, immediately going up to Him, he said: 'Hail, Rabbi,' and he kissed Him."

It was a refinement of torture for the Sacred Heart, which had poured out all its treasures upon Judas to win his love. But even his diabolical malice could not prevent a last attempt of the Sacred Heart to avert the dreadful doom of this unhappy man. From the lips of Jesus came the gentle rebuke, so full of tenderness: "Friend, wherefore are you come? Judas, do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" But love could no longer soften the heart of Judas. For the last time, he had been called "Friend"; never again will he hear his name spoken in accents of love; never again will he have a friend in the whole world, and, in a few hours, he will stand before his God to be judged. "The Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written: but woe to him by whom the Son of Man shall be betrayed!"

It is not enough for us to detest the crime of Judas; we have to bring home to ourselves that it is but a type of the many crimes that we ourselves do and can commit. The endless mercies of the Sacred Heart in our regard place Our Lord at the mercy of the same base ingratitude.

That contemptuous casting away of the friendship of Jesus, in order to obtain some fleeting pleasure, which, like thirty pieces of silver is but a misery in disguise, is a repetition by us of the betrayal. Remembering, therefore, how afflicted the Sacred Heart was by the sin of Judas and remembering also the countless number of mortal sins throughout the world, in particular our own personal sins, we begin dimly to realise the need of making reparation for the innumerable acts of treachery, man's return for His boundless love, and this we can very fittingly do by devotion to His Holy Face.

As the dread drama of the Passion unfolds itself, the insults to our Blessed Saviour multiply beyond number. In the night of Maundy Thursday, when our Blessed Lord stood arraigned before the court of the High Priest, Saint John tells us that because of one of His answers. Jesus was struck, receiving so terrible a blow that it deserved special mention among the many insults of the Passion. 'And when He had said these things, one of the servants standing by gave Jesus a blow, saying: "Answer You the High Priest so"?' (John 18:22). Saint John Chrysostom and other early Fathers identify this assailant of the Saviour with Malchus, whose ear Our Lord had miraculously healed but a few hours earlier. All through the rest of the night, "then they did spit in His Face" (Matthew 26:67). "And the men that held Him mocked Him and struck Him. And they blindfolded Him and struck Him with the palms of their hands" (Mark 14: 65). "And they blindfolded Him and struck His Face. And they asked Him, saying: 'Prophesy who it is that struck You?' And blaspheming, many other things they said against Him." (Luke 22:65).

Let us contemplate the ignominies to which the Holy Face of Our Lord was subjected during the rest of that night. He was imprisoned in a dungeon, surrounded not only by his guards, but also by the rabble of soldiers and servants that had come together to wreak their brutality on Him. Like their masters, they vie with one another in cruelty. Our Lord is seated on some convenient stone, and blows are rained on His Face from all sides: some blows being given by the open hand, others by hands encased in iron gauntlets. The air resounds with ribald songs and coarse jests. "They that drank wine made me their song." (Psalm 69:12. It is Psalm 68:13 in the Vulgate.) The Sacred Face is bruised, battered and streaming with spittle, and, in the midst of all these horrors, Our Lord sits patient and uncomplaining. The love of the Sacred Heart for each of us is so great that He willingly bears all these insults for us. From time to time, one of the priests comes down to see how matters are faring and to gloat over Our Lord's misery, and, at each visit, the horrible orgy gains in intensity.

At length, they devise a new kind of game. Is He not the great Prophet, so He can prophesy for them, and at once, a filthy rag is found, and with it, they veil the majesty of the Holy Face. Then, one by one, they come before Him, and bending the knee in mockery, they strike Him with many blows. "Prophesy who it is that struck You?" As these men stood before the veiled Face of Jesus, He saw each of them distinctly, and also every human being, who, in the ages yet to come, would ever join in mockery of Him. Perhaps His all-pure eyes recognised you and me in that crowd of daring sinners! If so, here we have sufficient reason for reparation to His Holy Face. For our consolation, in after years, He was to reveal to a holy soul that He would accept every act of reparation offered to His Holy Face, and that He would delight to restore to our souls the beauty they had on leaving the baptismal font.

In this meditation, we cannot follow the Passion step by step. There was never a moment during it that Our Lord's Face was not the special object of degradation. His captivity in the hands of the brutal soldiers was a perpetual outrage. His examinations before Pilate, the humiliations, which He endured at the hands of the shrieking mob that hooted after Him, crying out for His blood in the streets of Jerusalem, His mockery before Herod, all of these were affronts from which His Sacred Heart shrank with the keenest sensitiveness, but all of which He bore for us with the tenderest patience. But let us dwell for a moment on the dreadful scene after the scourging, when the horrors of the preceding night are again repeated by the soldiery of Pilate. During the night-watches, He has been treated with derision as the great Prophet and Physician of souls. It is His Holy Head, which is now to be the target of their mockery. "And, stripping Him, they put a scarlet cloak about Him, and, plaiting a crown of thorns, they put it upon His Head, and a reed in His right hand, and, bowing their knees, they adored Him, saying: 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and they gave Him blows. They struck His Head with the reed and they did spit upon Him."

The scarlet cloak of mock royalty is about Him, the diadem of cruel thorns is on His Head, decorated with the rubies of His Precious Blood, and the frail reed in His hand, the sceptre of His kingly power. Remembering how very sensitive we are to the least insult to our pride, which is based on our nothingness and sins, let us contemplate with fear and trembling the sight of the outraged majesty of our God, and let us adore the Holy Face, which willingly suffered such great things for our love.

The sentence has been pronounced and the whole city is in a tumult. Surrounded by an infuriated mob, He is torn and exhausted, really "a worm and no man." Dragged by soldiers, carrying His Cross, Our Lord proceeds slowly through the streets crowded with sightseers, for, at the time of the Pasch, Jerusalem was filled with Jews from all parts of the known world. The awful procession now draws near to a certain house, in which one of those faithful women dwells, who used to minister to Jesus, and whose heart is still full of love for Him. A momentary halt is made outside her house. She sees the Face of her divine Master streaming with blood and the sweat of agony, disfigured by filth and spittle. In a moment, braving all the insults and anger of the mob, she is by His side, she hands Him her folded veil, and with it, Our Lord wipes His adorable Face and Eyes that are streaming with tears and blood. She is quickly hustled away and forced to take shelter in her house. The tragic procession moves on, and Veronica, through her tears, gazes on the veil. Swift as was Our Lord's forgiveness for the repentant Peter, swift as will be His answer to pardon the dying thief on his cross, so also just as swift has been the reward for Veronica's pity. She kneels in reverence before the Veil, now become her dearest treasure, for on it, miraculously imprinted, are the features of her divine Master. He has given her a lasting pledge of His undying gratitude, a pledge, too, of the wonders of grace that He will work in souls who seek to make reparation to the Sacred Heart for the insults and outrages upon His Holy Face.

Saint Veronica and the Authentic Picture of the Holy Face.

In some popular manuals of devotion we read that Veronica was the name of the image of the Holy Face imprinted on the veil, and that no such saint as she ever existed at the time of the Passion. This is a mistake. ('Veronica' does mean 'true image', but many a proud father had said that his new daughter was a 'true image' of its beloved mother.) The best authorities prove beyond doubt that Veronica was the name of the woman who, through pity, gave Him the veil to wipe His Face. Many learned authors think that she was also the woman cured by Jesus, by touching the "hem of His

garment." Full of gratitude for this miracle, she followed His footsteps with Our Lady, Magdalen and the other holy women, and watched every stage of the Passion.

Father Ventura (Gioacchino Ventura di Raulica) writes: "It is probable that she who received the distinguished favour from Our Lord of wiping with her own hands the sweat and blood from His Face, is the same who touched His garment with heroic faith, and, in doing so, rendered a most beautiful testimony to His Divinity."

Piazza, a learned writer of the eighteenth century, describes it thus: "After Jesus had left the Praetorium, laden with His cross and covered with blood, which issued from the wounds received during the Scourging and Crowning with thorns, and gone four hundred and fifty steps on the road to Calvary, He approached a house that stood at the corner of the street. Veronica, then seeing Him from afar, came full of pity to meet Him, and, having removed the veil she wore on her head, she gave it to Him that He might use it to wipe His Holy Face, all bathed as it was with blood and sweat. Christ, having benignantly received it, gave it back to her, when He had used it, leaving upon it, as a gracious recompense, the impress of His Holy Face. The resemblance is so complete that it is even possible to perceive the mark made by the hand that dealt Him the sacrilegious blow. Rejoicing over so precious a treasure, the illustrious lady preserved it in her house with jealous care."

Veronica is said to have given the precious relic to Pope Saint Clement, the third successor to Saint Peter. Like all the other sacred relics, the Veil was preserved for centuries with the greatest care and reverence, as well as the greatest secrecy. That Veronica herself conveyed the relic to Rome is the unanimous opinion of all holy writers on the subject. The learned Pope Benedict XIV (1740-1758) writes: "In the Basilica of the Vatican, in addition to the Spear and Lance, is also preserved and greatly venerated the Sudarium, which has perfectly kept, and still keeps, the impression of the Holy Face of Our Lord Jesus Christ, bathed in sweat and blood."

Dante, in his immortal poem, meets Veronica in Paradise, and, seeing the Veil, exclaims with admiration: "Oh! My Lord! Jesus Christ True God, it is thus then that Your Holy Face has been preserved."

Piazza, who wrote in 1713, describes the Holy Face thus: "The Head of Christ is everywhere transpierced with thorns. The Forehead is bleeding, the Eyes swollen and bloodshot, the Face pale and livid. Upon the right Cheek the cruel mark of the blow given by Malchus, with his iron gauntlet, sorrowfully attracts attention; the same as the spittle of the Jews and the stains on the left Cheek. The Nose is flattened and bleeding; the Mouth open and filled with blood; the Beard torn in several places, and the Hair is also torn on one side."

The facsimile of the Holy Face sent from Rome corresponds with the above description.

For a long time it was forbidden, under pain of excommunication, to produce copies of this Holy Face. (Apparently, fraudsters were abusing the copies to make money through a sort of simony.) Since 1848, under the pontificate of [Blessed] Pope Pius IX, authorised copies have been printed on linen, cotton or silk. They are impressed with a seal, which is a guarantee that they are authentic and are true copies of the real Holy Face. They have also touched the Lance and Spear and the Wood of the True Cross. It may be added, the copies marked with the seal have the same privileges as the miraculous Holy Face itself.

We know from the writings of the saints, that all through the centuries, devotion to the Holy Face of Our Lord was practised in the Church. But it was in the middle of the last (nineteenth) century that a fresh impetus was given to it.

Extract from Cardinal [Blessed John Henry] Newman's "Meditations on Christian Doctrine".

'...I see the figure of a man, whether young or old I cannot tell. He may be fifty, or He may be thirty. Sometimes He looks one, sometimes the other. There is something inexpressible about His Face, which I cannot solve. Perhaps, as He bears all burdens, He bears that of old age also. But so it is: His Face is at once most venerable and most child-like, most calm, most sweet, most modest, beaming with sanctity and with loving kindness. His eyes rivet me and move my heart: His breath is all-fragrant and transports me out of myself. Oh! I will look upon that Face for ever and will not cease!

'And I see suddenly someone come to Him, and raise his hand and sharply strike Him on that heavenly Face. It is a hard hand, the hand of a rude man, and perhaps has iron on it. It could not be so sudden as to take Him by surprise, who knows all things past and future, and He shows no sign of resentment, remaining calm and grave as before; but the expression of His Face is marred: a great weal arises, and in a little while that all-gracious Face is hid from me by the effects of this indignity, as if a cloud came over it.

'A hand was lifted against the Face of Christ. Whose hand was that? My conscience tells me: "You are the man." I trust it is not so with me now. But, O my soul, contemplate the awful fact. Fancy Christ before thee, and fancy thyself lifting thy hand, and striking Him! Thou wilt say: "It is impossible: I could not do so!" Yes, thou hast done so. When thou didst sin wilfully, then thou hast done so. He is beyond pain now: still, thou hast struck Him, and, had it been in the days of His flesh, He would have felt the pain. Turn back in memory. and recollect the time, the day, the hour, when, by wilful mortal sin, by scoffing at sacred things, or by profaneness, or by acts of impurity, or by deliberate rejection of God's voice, or in any other devilish way known to thee, thou hast struck the All-Holy One!

'O injured Lord, what can I say? I am very guilty concerning Thee, my Brother: and I shall sink in sullen despair if Thou dost not raise me up. I cannot look upon Thee: I shrink from Thee: I throw my arms around my face: I crouch to the earth. Satan will pull me down, if Thou take not pity. It is terrible to turn to Thee: but, O, turn Thou to me, and so shall I be turned to Thee. It is a purgatory to endure the sight of Thee, the sight of myself – I, most vile – Thou, most holy. Yet, make me look once more on Thee, whom I have so incomprehensibly affronted, for Thy Countenance is my life; my only hope and health lies in looking on Thee, whom I have pierced. So I put myself before Thee: I look on Thee again: I endure the pain in order to gain the purification.

'O my God, how can I look Thee in the Face when I think of my ingratitude, so deeply seated, so habitual, so immovable – or rather so awfully increasing? Thou loadest me day by day with Thy favours, and feedest me with Thyself, as Thou didst Judas, yet, not only do I not profit thereby, but I do not even make any acknowledgment at the time. Lord, how long? When shall I be free from this real, this fatal, captivity? He who made Judas his prey has got hold of me in my old age, and I cannot get loose. It is the same, day after day. When wilt Thou give me a still greater grace than Thou hast given me – the grace to profit by the graces which Thou givest? When wilt Thou give me Thy effectual grace, which alone can give life and vigour to this effete, miserable, dying soul of mine? My God, I know not in what sense I can pain Thee in Thy glorified state; but I know that

every fresh sin, every fresh ingratitude I now commit, was among the blows and stripes which once fell on Thee in Thy Passion. O, let me have as little a share in those Thy past sufferings as possible. Day by day goes, and I find I have been more and more, by the new sins of each day, the cause of them. I know that, at best, I have a real share in solido (solidarity with and) of them all, but still it is shocking to find myself having a greater and greater share. Let others wound Thee, let not me! Let me not have to think that Thou wouldst have had this or that pang of soul the less, except for me. O my God, I am so fast in prison that I cannot get out. O Mary, pray for me.'

Invocations to The Holy Face in Reparation for Blasphemies and for the Conversion of Blasphemers.

Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, have mercy on us,

Christ, hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

Holy Mary, pray for us.

O adorable Face, which was adored with profound respect by Mary and Joseph, when they saw You for the first time, pray for us.

O adorable Face, which in the stable of Bethlehem did ravish with joy the Angels, the Shepherds and the Magi, pray for us.

O adorable Face, which in the Temple did transpierce with a dart of love the saintly old man Simeon and the prophetess Anna, pray for us.

O adorable Face, which was bathed in tears in Your holy Infancy, pray for us.

O adorable Face, which, when You were twelve years old, did appear in the Temple, and fill the doctors of the Law with admiration, pray for us.

O adorable Face, white with purity and ruddy with charity, pray for us.

O adorable Face, more beautiful than the sun, lovelier than the moon, more brilliant than the stars, pray for us.

O adorable Face, fresher than the roses of summer, pray for us.

O adorable Face, more precious than gold, silver and diamonds, pray for us.

O adorable Face, whose charms are so ravishing and whose grace is so attractive, pray for us.

O adorable Face, whose every feature is marked by nobility, contemplated by the angels, pray for us.

O adorable Face, sweet delectation of the saints, pray for us.

O adorable Face, Masterpiece of the Holy Ghost, in which the Eternal Father is well pleased, pray for us.

O adorable Face, delight of Mary and Joseph, pray for us.

O adorable Face, ineffable mirror of the divine perfections, pray for us.

O adorable Face, whose beauty is ever ancient and ever new, pray for us.

O adorable Face, which appeases the wrath of God, pray for us.

O adorable Face, which makes the devils tremble, pray for us.

O adorable Face, treasure of all grace and blessing, pray for us.

O adorable Face, exposed in the desert to the inclemency of the weather, pray for us.

O adorable Face, scorched by the heat of the sun, and bathed in sweat on Your journeys, pray for us.

O adorable Face, whose expression is wholly divine, pray for us.

O adorable Face, whose modesty and sweetness attracted both just and sinners, pray for us.

O adorable Face, which blessed and kissed the little children, pray for us.
O adorable Face, troubled and weeping at the grave of Lazarus, pray for us.
O adorable Face, brilliant as the sun and radiant with glory on Mount Thabor, pray for us.
O adorable Face, sad at the sight of Jerusalem and shedding tears over the ungrateful city, pray for us.
O adorable Face, bowed to the earth in the garden of Olives, and covered with shame at the sight of our sins, pray for us.
O adorable Face, bathed in a bloody sweat, pray for us.
O adorable Face, kissed by the traitor Judas, pray for us.
O adorable Face, whose sanctity and majesty smote the soldiers with fear and cast them to the ground, pray for us.
O adorable Face, struck by a vile servant, shamefully blind-folded and profaned by the sacrilegious hands of Your enemies, pray for us.
O adorable Face, defiled with spittle, and bruised with innumerable buffets and blows, pray for us.
O adorable Face, whose divine look wounded Peter's heart with a dart of sorrow and love, pray for us.
O adorable Face, humbled for us at the tribunals of Jerusalem, pray for us.
O adorable Face, which did preserve Your serenity when Pilate pronounced the fatal sentence, pray for us.
O adorable Face, covered with sweat and blood, and falling in the mire under the weight of the Cross, pray for us.
O adorable Face, worthy of our respect, veneration and devotion, pray for us.
O adorable Face, wiped by a pious woman on the road to Calvary, pray for us.
O adorable Face, raised up on the Cross, pray for us.
O adorable Face, whose brow was crowned with thorns, pray for us.
O adorable Face, whose Eyes were filled with blood, pray for us.
O adorable Face, into whose Mouth was poured vinegar and gall, pray for us.
O adorable Face, whose Hair and Beard were torn out by the executioners, pray for us.
O adorable Face, which was made to look like the face of a leper, pray for us.
O adorable Face, whose incomparable beauty was obscured under the dreadful cloud of the sins of the world, pray for us.
O adorable Face, covered with the shades of death, pray for us.
O adorable Face, washed and anointed by Mary and the holy women and then wrapped in a shroud, enclosed in the sepulcher, pray for us.
O adorable Face, all resplendent with glory and beauty on the day of the Resurrection, pray for us.
O adorable Face, all dazzling with light at the moment of Ascension, pray for us.
O adorable Face, hidden in the Blessed Sacrament, pray for us.
O adorable Face, which will appear with great majesty in the clouds of heaven at the end of the world, pray for us.
O adorable Face, which will cause sinners to tremble, and which will fill the Just with joy for all eternity, pray for us.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, Spare us, O Lord.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, Graciously hear us, O Lord.
Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, Have mercy on us.

O Lord. I salute You, I adore You, and I love You, O adorable Face of Jesus, my Beloved, noble seal of the Divinity; with all the powers of my soul, I apply myself to You and most humbly pray You to imprint the features of Your Divine likeness on my heart. Amen.

To the Holy Face.

Ah, awful Face of Love, bruised by my hand.
Turn to me, pierce me with Your Eyes of flame,
And give me deeper knowledge of my sin:
So let me grieve, and when I understand
How great my guilt, my ruin and my shame,
Open Your Sacred Heart, and let me in!

REV. HUGH R. BENSON.

Prayer of [Blessed] Pope Pius IX.

O my Jesus, cast a look of mercy on us: turn Your Face towards each of us, as You did to Veronica, not that we may see it with our bodily eyes, for this we do not deserve, but turn it towards our hearts, so that remembering You, we may ever draw from this fountain of strength the vigour necessary to bear the combats of life. Amen.

An Act of Reparation for all the Outrages Jesus Christ Suffered in His Holy Face for our Personal Sins.

I adore and praise You, O Divine Jesus, Son of the Living God; I desire to make reparation for all the outrages You have endured for me, the most miserable of Your creatures, in all the members of Your Blessed Body, and particularly in Your adorable Face, disfigured by blows and defiled by spittle, and hardly to be recognised through the cruel treatment which You did receive from the impious Jews of Jerusalem. I salute You, O blessed Eyes, all bathed in tears for my salvation. I salute You, O blessed Ears, assailed by insults, blasphemies and cruel mockeries. I salute You, O blessed Mouth, filled with graces and tenderness for us sinners, but embittered with vinegar and gall by the monstrous ingratitude of that people, whom You did choose, from among all others. In reparation for all these ignominies I offer You all the homage which is given You in that holy place, (Laon), where You are pleased to be honoured with a special worship, uniting myself thereto Amen.

(Abridged from the History of the Holy Face of our Saviour preserved in the cathedral at Laon.)

O most Holy Face of God made Man, battered, bruised and defiled for my sins in Your Passion. O Holy Face, which I myself have injured with more malice, more knowledge, more ingratitude than the soldiery of Pilate. Behold me kneeling before You in abject penitence and adoration, and by my veneration of Your Holy Face and my faithful service, I desire to consecrate myself like Veronica to the work of repairing, as far as is in my power, the injuries beyond number which I and all mankind have inflicted on Your Holy Face. Amen.

Blessed for ever be the holy Face of Jesus, our consolation on earth and our joy in heaven:

Prayers of Monsieur Leo Dupont, "the Holy Man of Tours".

O my Saviour, Jesus, at the sight of Your most Holy Face disfigured by suffering, at the sight of Your most Sacred Heart, so full of love, I cry with Saint Augustine: "Lord Jesus, imprint on my

heart Your sacred wounds, so that I may read therein sorrow and love; sorrow, to endure every sorrow for You; love, to despise every love for You."

'O adorable Face of my Jesus, so mercifully bowed upon the tree of the Cross on the day of Your Passion, for the salvation of men, now inclined in Your pity towards us, poor sinners; cast upon us a look of compassion, and receive us to the kiss of peace. Amen.'

'O Lord Jesus Christ, in presenting ourselves before Your adorable Face, to beg of You the graces we most need; we beseech You, to give us above all things the disposition of never refusing at any time to do what You require of us by Your commandments and divine inspirations. Amen.'

'Be merciful to us, O my God, and reject not our prayers when we call on Your Name in the midst of our afflictions, and seek Your adorable Face with loving hearts. Amen.'

'O Almighty and Eternal God, look upon the Face of Your Son, Jesus. We present it to You with confidence to implore Your pardon. The All-Merciful Advocate opens His Mouth to plead our cause: hearken to His voice; behold His tears, O God, and, through His infinite merits, listen to Him when He intercedes for us, poor sinners. Amen.'

'May I die consumed by an ardent thirst to see the adorable Face of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!'

(SAINT EDMUND).

(Towards the end of his life, Monsieur Dupont very often repeated this prayer.)

Prayer of the Little Flower to the Holy Face of Jesus.

"O Jesus, who, in Your cruel Passion did become the 'reproach of men and the Man of Sorrows,' I worship Your divine Face.

"Once it shone with the beauty and sweetness of the Divinity; but now, for my sake, it is become as 'the face of a leper.' Yet, in that disfigured Countenance, I recognise Your infinite love, and I am consumed with the desire of making You loved by all mankind.

"The tears that flowed so abundantly from Your Eyes are to me as precious pearls that I delight to gather, that with their worth I may ransom the souls of poor sinners.

"O Jesus, whose Face is the sole beauty that ravishes my heart, I may not see here below the sweetness of Your glance, nor feel the ineffable tenderness of Your kiss, I bow to Your Will – but I pray You to imprint in me Your divine likeness, and I implore You so to inflame me with Your love, that it may quickly consume me, and that I may soon reach the vision of Your glorious Face in heaven. Amen."

Hymn to the Holy Face.

O Holy Face, in life so sweet and gracious,
Whom children loved and sinners did not fear;
Look down upon me now in love and mercy.
Speak but one word my guilty soul to cheer.

I dread the thought that I must stand before You,
To hear my sentence from Your Lips so sweet:

O look upon me now while still there's mercy,
Here as I kneel repentant at Your Feet.

The Sinful Woman, as she crouched before You,
Dared not look up until she heard You speak:
Then fear was gone, and all at once she loved You,
Won by Your Voice, so gracious and so meek.

At Simon's banquet, Mary bathed Your dear Feet,
With tears drawn from her very inmost heart:
While cruel men looked on with eyes disdainful,
She cared not for You did take her part.

When Peter stood, the night before Your Passion,
A traitor branded – sunk in shame and grief:
Your Eyes met his, and then his whole soul
O'er-flowed with sorrow, true, as well as deep.

Look on me, Jesus, I again implore You,
Like Peter, too, a traitor I have been;
Not once, O Lord, but times beyond all counting.
Forgive the past, and say: "Be you made clean!"
S.M.B.

Prayer of Pope Clement IV. (1265-1268.)

O God, who did enlighten us with the light of Your Countenance, and who, to reward the loving kindness of Saint Veronica, did leave us the impression of Your Holy Face on her veil as a remembrance, grant that, through Your Cross and Passion, we may one day fearlessly look upon Your Holy Face, when You will come to judge the living and the dead.

Almighty and Eternal God, through whose grace the image of the Holy Face of Your Son does shine forth radiantly to Your devout people, grant us, we beseech You, the remission of our sins, and direct all the thoughts, words and actions of those who confide in Your mercy, who lives and reigns with the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

Hymn to the Holy Face.

Tears on Your Holy Face, my God!
Long sorrow told by tears.
A wreath of torture crowns at last
The agony of years.
Your glory dimmed, Your beauty fled,
Your tender, touching grace
Beams on us now no longer here,
O Sacred, Suffering Face!

Grief on Your Holy Face, my God!
The anguish that shall win
Hope for the desolate, with peace,
And pardon for the sin.

The sin whose deadly hands have laid
So deep, so sad a trace
On Brow, on Lips and weeping Eyes,
O Sacred, Suffering Face!

Love on Your Holy Face, my God!
The love that lives on and on,
Though light, and loveliness and joy,
To sight of earth are gone.
The love that calls us to Your Feet,
And folds in Your embrace,
The children of Your tears, my God!
O Sacred, Suffering Face!

We pray You for Your straying sheep,
We pray You for the eyes,
The lips, the hearts, that always bid
Your own hot tear-drops rise,
We pray You for this world of Thine,
Its wandering, wilful race.
Lead it, kind Shepherd, to Your shrine,
Your Sacred, Suffering Face!

Unclose Your weary Eyes, my God!
Bow down Your weary Head.
Over the souls that prostrate lie,
Your Precious Blood be shed.
O royal flood, O golden flood,
Of faith, of hope and grace,
Bless You the hearts and eyes that seek
Your Sacred, Suffering Face!

After Holy Communion.

Adore the Holy Face of Jesus, really present in your heart; contemplate each of His wounded features, and offer the merits of each to the Eternal Father for the conversion of sinners, the salvation of the dying, the intentions of the Pope and for your personal needs.

The Golden Arrow revealed by Our Lord Himself to Sister Saint Pierre in reparation for blasphemy against His Holy Name.

May the most holy, the most unutterable, the most Sacred Name of God be praised, blessed, adored and glorified and loved in heaven, on earth and under the earth by all creatures and by the Most adorable Heart of Jesus in the Most adorable Sacrament of the Altar!

Our Lord, on revealing this to the nun, told her this prayer gave Him great pleasure.

The Magnet of Souls.

O Holy Face, draw us to You by Your sweet grace,
That all we think or do or say,
May be for You alone today,
And by Your boundless love and grace,
O make us love Your Holy Face.

(Thanks to the Irish Messenger)
