more masterful than I am, and who hates this servitude.

"Imagine a nature irritated and exasperated to
distraction by this mysterious servitude and finally
delivered over to an abandoned hatred of the cross.

"He spits on this sign which he drags after him and
assures himself that the bonds which attach him to it
could never stand out against a methodical and planned
degradation of his soul and spirit.

"Thus he cultivates blasphemy and perfects it as an
art and fortifies his hatred of sacred things with an
armor of scornful contempt.

"Then suddenly, above this stupendous defilement,
a voice rises, complainingly, appealingly; it is hardly so
much as a cry, and no sooner has the sky received it
than the echo is smothered by frightful jeers and by the
laugh of the devil.

"As long as this man is strong enough, he will drag
this cross as a prisoner his ball-chain, never accepting it.
He will obstinately insist on wearing this wood along all
the paths of the world. He will choose the lands of fire
and ashes most suited to consume it.

"However heavy the cross becomes, it will not
exhaust his hatred until the fateful day, the turning-point
in his destiny, when he sinks down at last under the
weight of the tree and under its agonizing embrace.

"He still writhes, pulls himself together and then
sinks down again, hurling out a last blasphemy. From
his hospital bed he brings abominable accusations
against the nuns who are tending him; he treats the
angelic sister as a fool and an idiot and then, at last, he
breaks off. This is the moment marked from all eternity.

"The cross which has dragged him for thirty-seven
years and which he has denied and covered with spittle,
offers its arms to him: the dying man throws himself
upon it, presses it to, him, clings to it, embraces; he is
serenely sad and heaven is in his eyes. His voice is
heard: 'Everything must be prepared in my room,
everything must be arranged. The chaplain will come
back with the Sacraments. You will see. They're going
to bring the candles and the lace. There must be white
linen everywhere...'

No! Religion is not the opium of the people.

Opium is the drug of deserters who are afraid to
face the Cross—the opiate that gives momentary escape
from the Hound of Heaven in pursuit of the human soul.

Religion, on the contrary, is the elixir which spurs a
soul on to the infinite goal for which it was made.
Religion supplies the profoundest desires.

The greatest thirst of all is the thirst of unrequited

love—the hand reached out which never grasps; the
arms outstretched which never embrace; the hand
knocking on a door which is never opened. It is these
things religion satisfies by making man think less about
his passing desires and more about his ultimate desire.

His passing desires are multiple and fleeting—gold
one minute, food another, pleasure another. But his
ultimate desire is unique and abiding—the perfect
happiness of everlasting joy and peace. It is our duty to
lead men to the realization of this desire.

Those who hate religion are seeking religion; those
who wrongly condemn are still seeking justice; those
who overthrow order are seeking a new order; even
those who blaspheme are adoring their own gods—but
still adoring.

From certain points of view they are all prisoners of
Divine Love; they are confusing desires with the desire,
passions with love.

_They are all living in the shadow of the Cross, they
are all thirsting for the Fountain of Divine Life. Their
lips were made to drink and we must not refuse to reach
them the cup._

— (The Rainbow of Sorrow, New York, Garden City

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**The Need of Zeal**

Most Rev. Fulton J. Sheen

"I Thirst."

**The Fifth Word from the Cross**

The cry, "I thirst," refers not to physical thirst. It
was His soul that was burning and His Heart that was
on fire. He was thirsting for the souls of men. The
Shepherd was lonely without His sheep; the Creator
was yearning for His creatures; the First-born was
looking for His brethren.

All during His life He had been searching for
souls. He left heaven to find them among the thorns;
it mattered little if they made a crown of, them for
Him, so long as He could find the one that was lost.
He said He came "not to call the just, but sinners,
and His Heart thirsted for them now more than ever.
He could not be happy until every sheep and every
lamb was in His sheep-fold. "Other sheep I have, that
are not of this fold: them also I must bring ... and
there shall be one fold and one shepherd."

There was sorrow in His sad complaint during
life; "You will not come to me"; but there is tragedy
in the last cry: "I thirst."

There was probably no moment during the three
hours of redemption in which Our Lord suffered
more than in this. Pains of the body are nothing
compared to the agonies of the soul.

Taking His life did not mean so much to Him,
for He was really laying it down of Himself. But for
man to spurn His Love—that was enough to break
His Heart.

It is difficult for us to grasp the intensity of this
suffering, simply because none of us ever loves
enough. We have not the capacity for love that He
has, therefore we can never miss so much when it is
denied.

But when our tiny little hearts are sometimes
denied the love they crave, we do get some faint inking
of what must have gone on in His Own Great Heart.

The faithful loyal wife whose husband is snatched
from her by death, the mother whose son refuses to visit
her and bless her declining days with filial affection, the
friend who has sacrificed all only to be betrayed by one for whom he gave all—all these experience the keenest and bitterest of all human sufferings: the pangs of unrequited love. Such victims can and really do die of a broken heart.

But what is this love for another human being, compared to the love of God for man? The affection a human heart bears for another lessens as it multiplies the objects of its love, just as a river loses its fullness the more it divides itself into little streams.

But with God there is no decrease of love with the increase of objects loved, any more than a voice loses its strength because a thousand ears hear it.

Each human heart can break His Sacred Heart all over again; each soul has within itself the potentiality of another crucifixion. No one can love as much as Our Lord; no one therefore can suffer as much.

Added to this was the fact that His infinite Mind saw within that second all the unfaithful hearts that would ever live until the end of time; all who would follow like Judas, and then betray; all who would fall and refuse His helping Hand; in a word, all who would pass by His Cross and only stop with the executioners to shake dice for His garments, while within a stone's throw of them would be the Prize so precious it was worth gambling their very lives away.

It was this picture of ungrateful men which renewed the Agony of the Garden and caused His Death. He died of thirst in the desert of human hearts!

From this Word we discover this great lesson: the necessity of our loving our fellow men as Our Lord loves us.

If Jesus Christ thirsted for souls, must not a Christian also thirst? If He came to cast fire upon the earth, must not a Christian be enkindled? If He came to bring us the seed of Life, must not that seed fructify and increase of objects loved, any more than a voice loses its power of expression when a thousand ears hear it.

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