

The Herald of Divine Love

St. Gertrude of Helfta

1. Planted in the side of Christ: “Afterward, when she had received the body of Christ, she beheld her soul, as was said above, in the likeness of a tree fixing its roots of the side of Jesus Christ; she felt in some new and marvelous way that there was passing through this wound, as through a root, and penetrating into all her branches and fruit and leaves a wondrous sap which was the virtue of the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ. Thus through her soul, the work of his whole life took on more splendor, like gold gleaming through crystal...As she was praying, each single one of her good works (symbolized by the fruits of the tree) began to distill a beneficent liquid. Part of this liquid spread over the blessed, increasing their bliss; another part of it spread over the earth, increasing the sweetness of grace for the just, and for the sinners the bitterness of repentance” (177)
2. Consolation and Aridity: “She was considering the judgment of God in giving some souls great consolation in his service, while other souls remain in a state of aridity, and was enlightened thus by God: “The heart has been created by God to hold delight, just as a vessel for holding water. Now if the vessel holding water lets it seep out through any small cracks, the vessel will gradually empty and become dry; so if the human heart that is filled with spiritual delight lets it seep out through the senses of the body, by seeing and hearing, or by allowing any of the other bodily senses to be freely indulged, it could leak out in such a way that the heart would become wholly emptied of delight in God. And anyone can experience this for himself. If one desires to see something, or to say some word in which there is little or no profit, and one does it at once, one thinks it is of no importance, because it slips away as easily as water. But if one proposes to restrain oneself for God’s sake, the spiritual delight will increase so much that soon the heart will be too small to contain it. Thus it is that when a man restrains himself in such matters, he come to experience delight in God; and the harder he has to strive to do it, the more pleasure he will find in God, and the more fruitful will be his devotion.” (202)
3. How the Lord draws her to himself: “Just as you stretch out your hand when you want to take hold of something and, when you have taken it, you draw it back toward you; so, languishing for love of you (Song 2.5), when you are distracted by exterior things, I stretch out my heart to you to draw you to myself; and, again, when, your inmost thoughts in harmony with mine, you recollect yourself, and again attend to me, then I draw back my heart again, and you with it, into myself, and from it I offer you the pleasure of all its many virtues” (190)

4. Eucharistic Wound: "Imploring the Lord to receive his most sacred host for her himself in his own person in her place and to incorporate it into himself; and then to breathe into her each hour with his sweet and noble breath just as much as he knew to be suitable to her small capacity. After that, she reposed for a time in the bosom of the Lord, as it were beneath the shadow of his arm (cf. Ps. 90.4). She was so placed that her left side seemed to be held against the Lord's blessed right side. After a little while, raising herself, she perceived that through the contact with the wound of love in the Lord's most sacred side, her left side had been drawn into a sort of ruddy scar. Then, as she was going to receive the body of Christ, the Lord himself seemed to receive the consecrated host in his divine mouth. It passed through his body and proceeded to issue from the wound in the most sacred side of Christ, and to fix itself almost like a dressing over the life-giving wound. And the Lord said to her: 'Behold, this host will unite you to me in such a way that on one side it touches your scar and on the other my wound, like a dressing for both of us. You must cleanse it, as it were, and renew it every day by turning over in your mind with devotion the hymn '*Jesu nostra redemption*'" (184)

Lord Jesus Christ,

Son of the living God, grant that I may, with all my heart, all my desire, and with a thirsting soul, aspire toward you; and in you, most sweet and pleasant, take my rest. With my whole spirit and all that is within me, may I sigh always for you in whom alone true blessedness is to be found. Inscribe with your precious blood, most merciful Lord, your wounds on my heart, that I may read in them both your sufferings and your love. May the memory of your wounds ever remain in the hidden places of my heart, to stir up within me your compassionate sorrow, so that the flame of your love may be enkindled in me. Grant also that all creatures may become vile to me, and that you may become the only sweetness of my heart." (99-100)

