

Saturday in Passion Week: The Cross the Science of the Christian

Summary of the Morrow's Meditation

We will tomorrow resume our meditations upon the cross, considered as the great book which instructs us, and we shall see that it teaches us: first, to feel a tender interest in all that has regard to our neighbour; second, to despoil ourselves entirely of the spirit of selfishness. Our resolution shall be: first, to seek in all things the glory of God and the good of our neighbour; second, to detach our hearts from everything else. Our spiritual nosegay shall be the words of St Paul: "*I judge not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ and Him crucified*" (I Cor. II:2).

Meditation for the Morning

Let us adore Jesus crucified as our Doctor and our Master. It is He who teaches us thoroughly what we ought to seek for esteem, and love; that is to say, the interests of God and of our neighbour, what we ought to fly, despise, and hate; that is to say, everything that is opposed to these two interests. Let us thank Him for this lesson, and let us ask of Him grace to conform our conduct to it.

THE CROSS TEACHES US TO FEEL A TENDER INTEREST IN ALL THAT REGARDS OUR NEIGHBOUR

The cross, in fact, shows us: first, in our neighbour, whoever he may be, a man so tenderly loved by Jesus Christ that, in order to save him, He came down from heaven to earth, became man and gave His blood, His honour, His liberty, and His life, and identified Himself so entirely with each child of Adam as to say, All that is done to the least of My brethren I look upon as done to Myself, and all which is refused to them I look upon as refused to Myself (Matt. xxv:40-45). Now, this being understood, it is evident that under penalty of failing in our duty to Jesus Christ we ought to feel a tender interest in all that has regard to our neighbour, to his salvation, to his reputation, or to his honour, to his joys, to his sorrows, to his prosperity or his reverses. To be careless respecting the interests of a person so dear to Our Lord, to wound him, to grieve him, to injure or scandalise him, is to wound Jesus Christ Himself in the very apple of His eye. All the interests of this man ought to be as dear to us as those of Jesus Christ; we ought to esteem ourselves happy and honoured by all we can perform for His service and lovingly seize every opportunity of doing so. Second, the cross teaches us to what extent we ought to carry zeal for the interests of our neighbour; for if Jesus Christ on the eve of His death commanded us to love each other as He Himself has loved us (John XIII:34), the cross offers itself to us as being the commentary on this precept; it teaches us that we ought to be disposed to make the utmost sacrifice for the good of our neighbour, to suffer everything from others without making anyone suffer, to bear privation and discomforts, and, according to circumstances, to immolate ourselves wholly for the happiness of our brethren, since it is thus that the crucified Jesus has loved us. Let us here examine ourselves. How many services which we might have rendered have we refused to our neighbour? How many times have we seen him suffering discomfort and embarrassment, compromising his interests by

awkwardness or ignorance? We might have freed him from his painful position by a word of good counsel, by charitable advice, by a good office which would have cost us little; and turning away our heads, we have passed by without showing any interest in his misfortunes. Oh, how far we are from loving our brethren as Jesus Christ has loved us!

THE CROSS TEACHES US TO DIVEST OURSELVES ENTIRELY OF THE SPIRIT OF SELFISHNESS

Until Jesus Christ came, no one knew how to live except for self. To obtain for one's self enjoyments, riches, and glory; to keep at a distance from one's self poverty, suffering, and humiliation, such was the whole care of the human race. Jesus Christ appeared on the cross, showed Himself to the world, and from the summit of this new seat He says to the world: Learn of Me to forget yourself, to divest yourself of that miserable egoism which thinks only of self; which troubles itself but little that others should be unhappy, provided that it can enjoy; which believes that it aggrandises itself by surrounding itself here below with false goods, often even to the prejudice of others, and that it lowers itself by leading a hidden, unknown life, by depriving itself or by suffering in order to oblige others. Behold Me, I am the well-beloved Son of God, and yet I am poor, suffering, humiliated. If riches and abundance, pleasure and glory had been true goods, would not God, My Father, have given them to Me? If poverty, humiliation, and suffering had been evils, would He have made of them My portion? Learn from My example, and know that all which passes away is nothing (Philipp. III:8); "*that all is vanity except to love God and to serve Him*" (I Imit. 1:3). These sublime truths, issuing from Calvary eighteen centuries ago, have changed the face of the world; inspired thousands of souls with the most noble sentiments and the most generous sacrifices for the welfare of religion and of society; and such souls as these have been seen, detached from everything except the cross, to sell their goods for the solace of the poor, embrace an austere life, that they might belong more certainly to God, submit to persecution as to a piece of good fortune, and return delighted to have been deemed worthy to suffer for Jesus Christ. Behold how the cross has thus withdrawn egoism from the world, and has substituted for it charity with its heroic devotedness. Whosoever does not understand these things is possessed of only a false virtue, an alloy of a semblance of devotion united with the love of self, with a research of what will administer to its tastes and its comforts, frivolity, the love of the world and of its vanities: a worse state than is that of great vices, because great vices awaken remorse, whilst this false devotion makes the soul slumber in a security which leads it to death. Are we not of the number of those who have not yet understood this great lesson of the cross: death to egoism?

Resolutions and spiritual nosegay as above.