

Passion Sunday: How Jesus Crucified Loves us

At that time Jesus said to the multitudes of the Jews: *Which of you shall convince Me of sin? If I say the truth to you, why do you not believe Me? He that is of God heareth the words of God. Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God.* The Jews therefore answered, and said to Him: *Do we not say well that Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil?* Jesus answered: *I have not a devil; but I honour My Father, and you have dishonoured Me. But I seek not My own glory; there is One that seeketh and judgeth. Amen, amen, I say to you, if any man keep My word he shall not see death forever.* The Jews therefore said: *Now we know that Thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead and the prophets: and Thou sayest, if any man keep My word he shall not taste death forever. Art Thou greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? and the prophets are dead. Whom dost Thou make Thyself?* Jesus answered: *If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing. It is My Father that glorifieth Me, of whom you say that He is your God. And you have not known Him; but I know Him. And if I shall say that I know Him not, I shall be like to you, a liar. But I do know Him, and do keep His word. Abraham your father rejoiced that he might see My day: he saw it, and was glad.* The Jews therefore said to Him: *Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham?* Jesus said to them: *Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am.* They took up stones therefore to cast at Him: but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple.

The Gospel according to St John, VIII:46–59.

Summary of the Morrow's Meditation

The holy fortnight on which we are about to enter is destined for the honouring of the wounds of Our Saviour; and that we may appreciate how much love Jesus shows us in this mystery we will consider: first, who He is that suffers, and for whom He suffers; second, how much He suffers; third, what benefits He obtains for us by His sufferings. Our resolution shall be: first, to pass this fortnight in special sentiments of piety, of recollection, and of love towards the crucified Jesus; second, to keep the crucifix habitually before our eyes, and often and lovingly to kiss it. Our spiritual nosegay shall be the words of the Apostle: *“He loved me and delivered Himself for me”* (Gal. II:20).

Meditation for the Morning

Let us adore Jesus Christ overwhelmed by a sea of suffering and of ignominy. Let us say with the Apostle: It is His love for me which has reduced Him to this state. Let us love and bless so much love; let us compassionate so much suffering.

WHO IS HE THAT SUFFERS? WHO IS HE FOR WHOM HE SUFFERS?

Nothing is better suited than the contrast between these two thoughts to show what is the love of Jesus Christ for us in the midst of His sufferings. Great God! exclaims St Thomas, even if Thou wert my slave,

and I Thy master, there would be in the devotedness of a slave who should suffer such great things for his master an heroic love capable of overwhelming with amazement the most insensible of souls. What ought I, then, to think of the contrary supposition, which is the only true one? For we know well that it is the God of Calvary, it is the Lord and Master of all things, who humbles Himself and dies for His servant; it is the Eternal King of Ages who immolates Himself for His servant; it is God dying for a worm. O abyss of love! Again, if he for whom this God humbles Himself and dies were a friend worthy of His interest and of His love—but no; he for whom this God dies is at one and the same time nothingness by nature, since he has only a borrowed existence, and is sin by his origin and sin by malice. It is baseness itself in revolt against God; and God, against whom he has rebelled, dies to expiate his rebellion! It is a frightfully audacious creature who has dared to offend his Creator, and the offended God wills to die for his having offended Him! It is an ungrateful wretch who will not feel, and God knows it well, any gratitude for such great devotion; who will look with a dry eye and an insensible heart at the figure on the cross; who will coldly celebrate the holydays consecrated to the memory of so touching a mystery; and, what is still worse, it is a traitor who will violate his oaths, who will recommence his insults, who will crucify his God afresh insofar as it depends upon him, and that not once, but thousands of times; and yet, for a creature so abominable, so worthy of the anathemas of heaven and of earth, a God humbles Himself and dies! O abyss of love! O fathomless mystery of love!

THE GREATNESS OF THE SUFFERINGS OF THE SAVIOUR

Here new abysses of love open themselves up. Jesus Christ might, with a single drop of His blood, a single tear from His eyes, have redeemed the whole human race; but as love is more shown in proportion to the greater suffering endured for its sake, He gave Himself up to all kinds of suffering and of ignominies. He sacrifices all; first, His liberty, for He allows Himself to be bound like a captive; then His honour, for He consents to pass for a fool, for a criminal, for a blasphemer, for a man worse even than Barabbas, who was a thief and an assassin—worse than the two thieves between whom He was crucified, as being the most guilty of the three. He sacrifices His body; for, from the sole of His foot to the top of His head there are nothing but open wounds, blood which flows and bones exposed. He sacrifices His soul; for He gives it up as a prey to the anguish of death (Matt. xxvi:38), to the abandonment of creatures and of His own Father (Ibid. xxvii:46). Lastly, He sacrifices His life; for love immolates Him upon the altar of the cross (Is. liii:7); and, with His own free consent and His perfectly free will, He offers Himself for us to His Father (John x:17–18). O love! how incomprehensible thou art! How deep are thy abysses! And we—how have we responded to so much love? What have we done for Him who has done so much for us?

THE IMMENSE BENEFITS PROCURED FOR US BY THE SUFFERINGS OF THE SAVIOUR

The generosity of a benefactor is measured not only by the greatness of the sacrifices which he makes, but also by the excellence of the benefits which he bestows; and here are displayed fresh abysses of love! For the benefits which the Passion of the Saviour procures for us are really ineffable. They are, first, heaven opened and hell closed, death and sin vanquished. Without the Redemption, the whole human race was damned; by the Redemption, he who wills it can be saved, and those alone are damned who will to be damned. They are,

second, the titles of children of God, of heirs of the eternal Kingdom, of co-heirs and of members of Jesus Christ. What happiness and what glory! They are, third, faith, without which we should be like the heathen nations—without belief and without morals; hope, which consoles and supports; charity, which unites men to each other and to God; the Church, which teaches and directs us; the priesthood, that sun of the moral world; the holy sacrifice of the Mass, that mysterious link between heaven and earth; the sacraments, those channels through which the blood of the Saviour flows, bearing everywhere grace, strength, and life. Happy the fault of Adam, which was the means of our having such a Redeemer! (Bened. cer. pasch.) But woe to us if we abuse so many graces! Let us now at last decide better to love and better to serve the Author of these benefits.

Resolutions and spiritual nosegay as above.