

Tuesday after Sexagesima: The Passion of Our Lord

Summary of the Morrow's Meditation

In order to conform ourselves to the Roman liturgy, which tomorrow sets before the faithful the Passion of the Saviour, we will consider: first, that devotion to the Passion is a duty of the heart; second, that everything in religion prescribes this duty to us. We will then make the resolution: first, to have a crucifix always on the wall of our chamber, another upon our writing-table, and the third on our breast; second, to salute the crucifix each time that we enter into our chamber, or wherever we perceive it. We will retain as our spiritual nosegay the words of the Apostle: "*Think diligently upon Him that endured such opposition from sinners against Himself*" (Heb. xii:3).

Meditation for the Morning

Let us adore Jesus crucified, the great object of the devotion of all Christians. Let us unite ourselves with those who place all their happiness in meditating upon the crucifix and by means of this meditation gain the most sublime virtues.

DEVOTION TO THE PASSION IS A DUTY OF THE HEART

It would be to have no heart if we were to forget so great a benefit, to look with indifference at the crucifix, that most splendid trophy of the charity of a God, that admirable invention of the entrails of His mercy (Luke 1:78), to which we owe everything, the adoption of children of God, grace during life, and glory in eternity. If a friend had given his life for us, and had died in our stead in ignominy and torments, we should remember it until our last sigh, we should recall with emotion all the circumstances of his agony, and we should kiss with tears of affection the picture representing him suffering and dying for us. How much more should the love of Jesus crucified be impressed on our hearts and make us live and breathe only for Him! (II Cor. v:14-15) For upon the cross it is not for His friends that Jesus dies, but for those who had even become His enemies (Rom. v:8-9). It is written: "*Forget not the kindness of thy surety: for he hath given his life for thee*" (Sirach xxix:20). And this generous friend who has answered and paid for us, all unworthy as we were of such love, who is he, if it be not the Divine Crucified Jesus? Therefore, says St Augustine, if he who forgets the blessing of creation merits hell, he merits a thousand hells who forgets the blessing of redemption. Nevertheless, how many are there who scarcely ever think of it! Just because they have the crucifix constantly before their eyes, they become insensible to it, and just because they have the spectacle of love always in view, they become ungrateful; that was the great sorrow of St Francis of Assisi, that illustrious lover of the crucified Jesus. Day and night he shed tears over the ingratitude of men with regard to the cross of the Saviour, and when attempts were made to console him, "No," he replied, "all my life shall be inconsolable that my Saviour having so loved men, men should, nevertheless, love Him so little." Are we not of the number of those for whom the holy patriarch wept? What is our love for the crucifix? Do we ourselves wear it? Do we kiss it often? Do we look at it lovingly?

EVERYTHING IN RELIGION PREACHES DEVOTION TO THE PASSION OF THE SAVIOUR

The holy Mass, which is the principal act of religion, is nothing more than the reproduction of the sacrifice of Calvary. Consecrate and eat the Eucharist, said Jesus Christ to His apostles, in remembrance of Me, that is to say, according to the commentary of St Paul, in memory of My death, in honour of My cross (I Cor. XI:26). How admirable! Jesus Christ, wishing to inspire us all with a constant devotion for His cross, institutes, to be a memorial of it, not a temporary sacrament like the other sacraments, but a sacrament which alone has the privilege of being permanent, a sacrament which we possess day and night in the holy tabernacle, where this adorable Saviour lives continually in the state of a victim, preserving all the wounds upon His body, and showing them ceaselessly to us, in order that we may never lose the memory of them. Oh, who is there that would not respond to the desire of a God who conjures us not to forget Him, and who conjures us by a sacrament of so great price, by His last words, which the whole world looks upon as sacred: "*Do this for a commemoration of Me*" (Luke XXII:19). All that we see in church equally preaches to us devotion to the Passion: the cross is above the tabernacle, as being the place where it is most apparent, and where it first strikes the eye; it is carried in processions; it surmounts the summit of churches; it is represented upon the sacred vestments; the august sign of it is made in every ceremony; one day in each week, Friday, and feasts at different epochs are consecrated to it; a particular season of the year, the fortnight before Easter, is wholly given up to it; the way of the cross attracts the devotion of the faithful everywhere and at all seasons: so greatly does the worship of Jesus crucified enter into the essence of Christianity. And therefore it is that the saints, in whom is found the plenitude of the Christian spirit, have made the cross the most habitual object of their piety. St Paul glorified himself in the cross alone; he would know nothing save the cross; he lived always attached to the cross (Gal. II:19). St Augustine tells us that he fed his soul with meditation on the cross. St Francis of Assisi would not allow his followers to have any other object of meditation than the cross which he had placed in the place of reunion of his confraternity. St Bonaventure lived only in the wounds of the Saviour. "It is there," he said, "where I watch, where I take my repose, where I read, where I converse, where I will always be." It seems, remarks St Francis de Sales, as if when this great doctor wrote down the heavenly effusions of his soul, he had no other paper than the cross, no other pen than the lance which had pierced his Master's side, no other ink than His precious blood. Oh, how far are we from possessing these sentiments of the saints with regard to the Passion of the Saviour! Let us reanimate our faith; let us rekindle our love for Jesus crucified!

Resolutions and spiritual nosegay as above.