

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

Summary of the Morrow's Meditation

We will tomorrow consider the cross as a sacred chair, whence Jesus teaches us: first, to know God; second, to know ourselves. We will then make the resolution: first, to maintain a great respect for God and His infinite perfections, and to testify it to Him by our profound devotion in prayer and at church; second, to have a horror for all kinds of sin, and to take to heart the salvation of our soul. Our spiritual nosegay shall be the words of St Augustine: "*Lord, may I know Thee, that I may love Thee; may I know myself, that I may hate myself.*"

Meditation for the Morning

Let us honour the cross of Jesus Christ as being the book of the elect, the science of the saints; it is therein we learn better than by all the books which have ever been written, better than in the schools of all masters whatsoever, what God is and what we ourselves are. Let us thank Our Lord for these lessons.

THE CROSS TEACHES US TO KNOW GOD

To know God is not only the first and the most excellent of all kinds of knowledge; it is also the most necessary, for we cannot adore God, respect Him, and abase ourselves before Him, excepting in proportion to the knowledge we have of His greatness; we cannot praise and bless Him, except in proportion to our knowledge of His infinite wisdom; we cannot serve Him by a holy life, except in proportion to the knowledge we have of His infinite holiness; lastly, we love Him only in proportion as we know that He is good. Now, this greatness, this wisdom, this holiness, this goodness, it is the cross which gives us the knowledge and the highest opinions of them. First, it teaches us how great God is. Certainly the heavens recount His glory, and the innumerable worlds in the midst of which the whole earth, of which we form so small a part, is less than a drop of water in the ocean, show forth His greatness. Doubtless the prophet Baruch astonishes us when he shows us, at the voice of God, the sun and the moon hastening to place themselves in the spot marked out for them, the stars coming in their turn to say to God, Behold us! and advancing under His orders, like an army ranged in imposing order of battle. Isaiah is not less admirable when he makes us see all the nations as so little a thing in the sight of God that they are less than a drop of water glistening upon a rose; they are as though they were not, but the cross always gives me the most lofty ideas of God. There I see a God, the Victim, offered to God by a God-Priest, and I say to myself: If we may judge of the greatness of kings by the excellence of the gifts made to them and by the dignity of those who serve them, O eternal God, how great Thou art, Thou in presence of whom a God so profoundly abases Himself, Thou who hast as Thy minister a God-Priest, and who dost receive from His hands a God-Victim. Yes, Thou art truly infinite in greatness, and Thou canst not conceive an expression greater than what Thou art. Second, the cross speaks to us of the infinite wisdom of God, and what but infinite wisdom could have enclosed the immense within a limited being, conciliated all kinds of suffering with the beatific vision, make the immortal die, offer to divine justice a satisfaction superior to the offence, and wherein are displayed at one and the same time all the magnificence

of mercy? O divine wisdom, who workest such wonders in the cross, thou art, of a truth, infinite! Third, yet the holiness of God does not shine in the cross with a lesser splendour. Let us behold it, pursuing in a well-beloved Son sin, even to its merest shadow, punishing the appearances only of it with inflexible severity, and washing them in the very blood of this cherished Son. Fourth, what shall we say of the divine goodness, of the goodness of God the Father, who immolates His Son for a rebellious, wicked, ungrateful slave; of the goodness of God the Son, who, entering into the views of His Father, gives Himself up to torments and death in order to save us? Is not this the most sublime ideal of goodness? O divine perfection! O greatness! O wisdom! O holiness! O goodness! how magnificently the cross shows you forth! I have not known you enough up till now; but now I see you are so beautiful, so ravishing that I will consecrate the remainder of my life to adore, to praise, to bless, and to love you.

THE CROSS TEACHES US TO KNOW OURSELVES

I question the cross respecting my nature, and it replies to me that I am a mysterious mixture of greatness and of baseness. What grandeur there is in me! The dignity of my nature is so eminent, that God has redeemed me in preference to the angels, whom He has left without redemption. My salvation is so dear to God that, in order to work it, a God came down from heaven and died upon the cross. My soul is placed in such a lofty position in the esteem of God that, in order to redeem it, He gave the blood of His Son. Sublime truths which teach us to value our salvation above everything else, not to allow our soul, which is so great, to debase itself to earthly and sensual affections, but always to maintain it at the height of its excellence by a pure and holy life. By the side of this greatness the cross shows us our baseness and our misery; it tells us that sin has cast us into so profound a state of wretchedness that it is impossible for us to raise ourselves out of it by our own efforts, incapable even to offer to the offended God the least reparation; it tells us that original sin has deposited in us a tendency to evil, an aversion from what is commanded, a heart so bad, so hard, that a God was unable to gain us except at the price of His death upon the cross, and even then that His success has been very small. Oh, how worth nothing we are! how miserable we are! how humble and penitent we ought to be, how contrite, how mortified! Such are the lessons given us by the cross.

Resolutions and spiritual nosegay as above.