

Friday in the First Week: The Devotion to the Nails and Lance of the Passion

Summary of the Morrow's Meditation

In conformity with the Roman liturgy, we will meditate tomorrow: first, on the nails that fastened Jesus to the cross; second, on the lance which opened His sacred side. We will then make the resolution: first, to make frequent acts of love to the crucified Jesus, and not to refuse Him any sacrifice; second, to excite ourselves to this love by often kissing the feet, the hands, and the sacred side of our crucifix, which recall to us the wounds made by the nails and the lance in the body of the Saviour. Our spiritual nosegay shall be the words of St Paul: "*The charity of Christ presseth us*" (II Cor. v:14).

Meditation for the Morning

Let us transport ourselves in spirit to Calvary; let us there contemplate Jesus on the cross; let us press our lips to His feet and His hands pierced by the nails, and to His sacred side opened by the lance; let us mingle our tears with the blood which flows; let us love the God who has so loved us.

ON DEVOTION TO THE NAILS WHICH ATTACHED JESUS TO THE CROSS

Doubtless if we see in these nails only a piece of common iron, they do not deserve any worship; but if we look upon them as empurpled with the divine blood which they caused to spring forth from the veins of Jesus; as impregnated with His flesh which they tore; as consecrated by their sojourn in that same flesh, who is there that does not see how venerable they are and what lessons they impart to us? First, they recall that spirit of obedience and submission which is the real spirit of Christianity, and which is so opposed to the spirit of the world which dreams of nothing but liberty and independence. The executioners said to Jesus: Stretch out Thy hands, stretch down Thy feet, that we may pierce them with nails. Jesus obeys; they nail Him to the cross, and He loses all power of movement; second, in fastening Jesus by a visible link to the cross, these nails make us to feel more acutely the invisible links of His charity which kept Him so firmly attached to it; third, they tell us how we ought to weep over the bad use we have made of our hands and our feet, the irregularity which marks our acts and our affections, since it cost Jesus so much to expiate them; fourth, they preach patience to us; for who can conceive all that Jesus suffered, and the patience with which He suffered it, whether when the executioners, driving the nails with great blows of their hammers into the most sensitive and nervous parts of the body, made four great wounds in it, whence flowed forth four rivulets of blood; or when, after having raised the cross, they let it fall into the excavation below with a terrible concussion which renewed all His sufferings and enlarged His wounds? O my Saviour, I adore Thee raised between heaven and earth, as the victim upon the altar of sacrifice to reconcile the one with the other; as our doctor and our master teaching us all truth. I love, O Jesus, those outstretched arms which tell us that Thou dost embrace us in Thy love; that head bristling with thorns, which, having nothing on which to lean, bows itself down to give us the kiss of peace and of reconciliation; that breast bruised with blows, but which still rises and falls

with the beatings of love which agitate Thy heart; those hands which the weight of the body suspended in the air drags violently down; and those feet, the wounds in which widen under the weight of the body with which they are laden! Oh, who would not love Him whose nails reveal to us so much love!

ON DEVOTION TO THE LANCE WHICH OPENED THE SACRED SIDE OF JESUS

St Bonaventure had a very special devotion for the lance which opened the sacred side. O happy lance! he exclaimed, which wast worthy to make that opening. Oh, if I had been in the place of that lance, I would not have come out again from the side of Jesus; I should have said: Here is the place of repose which my heart has chosen, I will dwell therein forever, and nothing shall ever be able to tear me away from it. At least, adds the pious doctor, I will keep myself near the opening; there I will speak to the heart of my master and I shall obtain all that desire. St Bernard thought the same. That most blessed lance, he said, although handled by a soldier, was guided by Jesus, who thus opened to us His sacred side in order to show us thereby His divine heart all palpitating with love for us, or rather that He might give it us, and make us enter into it. O mysterious entrance! it is by it that we reach the heart of Jesus; that heart so good, so amiable, so loving and entirely ours; that heart, the true holy of holies, where the soul, shutting up itself therein, prays, adores, and loves as it ought; the true ark of salvation in which all should take refuge who do not desire to perish in the deluge of the world. Oh, a thousand times venerable, a thousand times blessed be the lance, which opened to us the door by which have come to us such great blessings, so many graces, and so much love!

Resolutions and spiritual nosegay as above.