

THE MYSTERIES OF THE ROSARY - II

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THE MYSTERIES OF CHRIST IN THE ROSARY

Christ came to earth to be our model.

The Word became Incarnate, not only to bring us the gospel of salvation and to accomplish our redemption, but also to serve as a pattern for our spiritual lives.

Each of Christ's mysteries is a revelation of His virtues. The humility of the crib, the retirement of His hidden life, the zeal of His public life the self-annihilation of His Sacrifice, the glory of His triumph, all these disclose virtues which we must imitate; they are mysteries in which we should participate.

This is the reason why the contemplation of the mysteries of Christ— for instance, while

reciting the Rosary—is so fruitful for the soul. The life, the death, and the glory of Jesus serve as ideal models for our life and death and glory.

Never forget this truth: the Eternal Father is pleased with us only in so far as we imitate His Son and inasmuch as He sees in us the likeness of His Son, for it is in His image that He has predestined us from all eternity.

For us there is no other form of sanctity than that which Christ has shown us. The degree of our perfection is measured by the degree of our imitation of Jesus and of our union with Him.

I. THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES



The First Sorrowful Mystery

The Agony in the Garden - Repentance

Then Jesus came with them into a country place which is called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples: Sit you here, till go yonder and pray. Then saith to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death: stay you here, and watch with me. And going a little further, he fell upon his face, praying, and saying: My Father, if it be possible, let this Chalice pass from me. Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh to his disciples, and findeth them asleep, and he saith to Peter: What? Could you not watch one hour with me? (St. Matt26: 36,38,39,40)

1. The Agony in the Garden

It is for the love of His Father above all else that Jesus willed to undergo His Passion.

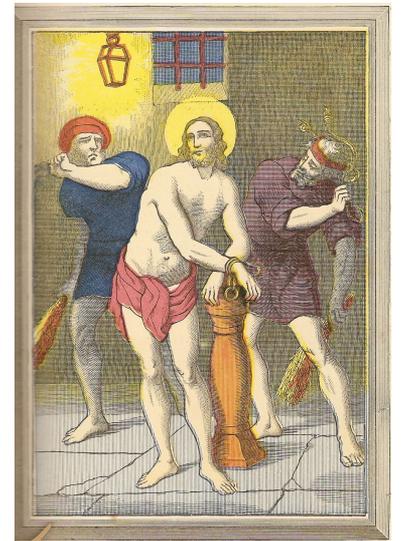
Behold Jesus Christ in His agony. For three long hours weariness, grief, fear and anguish sweep in upon His soul like a torrent; the

pressure of this interior agony is so immense that blood bursts forth from His sacred veins. What an abyss of suffering is reached in this agony! And what does Jesus say to His Father? "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me." Can it be that Jesus no longer accepts the Will of His Father? Oh! certainly He does. But this prayer is the cry of the sensitive emotions of poor human nature, crushed by ignominy and suffering. Now is Jesus truly a "Man of Sorrows." Our Savior feels the terrible weight of His agony bearing down upon His shoulders. He wants us to realize this; that is why He utters such a prayer.

But listen to what He immediately adds: "Nevertheless, Father, not My will but Thine be done." Here is the triumph of love. Because He loves His Father, He places the Will of His Father above everything else and accepts every possible suffering in order to redeem us.

The Second Sorrowful Mystery

The Scourging at the Pillar - Purity



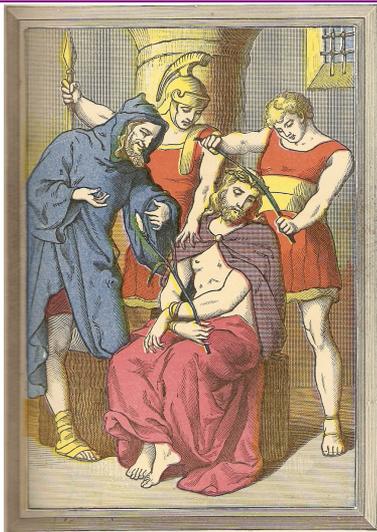
Pilate therefore said to him: Art thou a king then? Jesus answered: Thou sayest that I am a king. For this was I born, and for this came I into the world; that I should give testimony to the truth. Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice. Pilate saith to him: What is truth? And when he said this, he went out again to the Jews, and saith To them: I find no cause in him. But you have a custom That I should release one unto you at the Pasch: will you, Therefore, that I release unto you the king of the Jews? Then cried they all again, saying not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber. Then therefore Pilate Took Jesus, and scourged him. (St. John 19: 37-40)

2. The Scourging

Christ substituted Himself voluntarily for us as a sacrificial victim without blemish in order to pay our debt, and, by the expiation and the satisfaction which He made for us, to restore the Divine life to us. This was the mission which Christ came to fulfill, the course which He had to run. "God has placed upon Him"—a man like unto ourselves, of the race of Adam, but entirely just and innocent and without sin—"the iniquity of us all."

Since Christ has become, so to speak, a sharer in our nature and taken upon Himself the debt of our sin, He has merited for us a share in His justice and holiness. In the forceful words of St. Paul, God, "by sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin-offering, has condemned sin in the flesh." And with an impact still more stunning, the Apostle writes: "For our sakes He (God) made Him (Christ) to be sin who knew nothing of sin." How startling this expression is: "made Him to be sin"! The Apostle does not say "sinner," but—what is still more striking—"sin"!

Let us never forget that "we have been redeemed at great price by the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."



The Third Sorrowful Mystery

The Crowning of Thorns - Courage

Then stripping him, they put a scarlet cloak about him. And plating a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand. And bowing the knee before him, they mocked him,, saying: Hail, king of the Jews. And spitting upon him, they took the reed, and struck his head. And after they mocked him, they took off the cloak from him, and put on him his own garments, and led him away to crucify him. (Matt 27: 28-31)

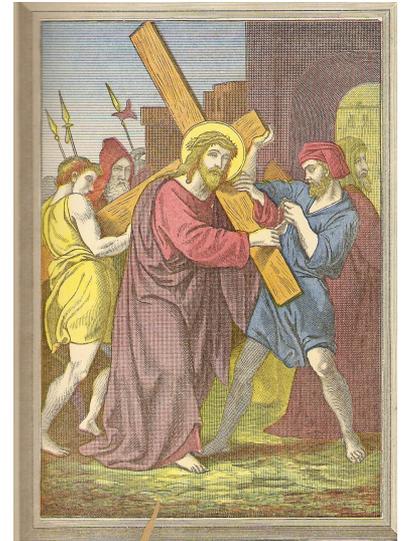
3. The Crowning with Thorns

Christ Jesus becomes an object of derision and insults at the hands of the temple servants. Behold Him, the all-powerful God, struck by sharp blows; His adorable face, the joy of the saints, is covered with spittle; a crown of thorns is forced down upon His head; a purple robe is placed upon His shoulders as a mock of derision; a reed is thrust into His hand; the servants genuflect insolently before Him in mockery. What an abyss of ignominy! What humiliation and disgrace for One before Whom the angels tremble!

The cowardly Roman governor imagines that the hatred of the Jews will be satisfied by the sight of Christ in this pitiful state. He shows Him to the crowd: "Ecce Homo—Behold the Man!"

Let us contemplate our Divine Master at this moment, plunged into the abyss of suffering and ignominy, and let us realize that the Father also presents Him to us and says to us: "Behold My Son, the splendor of My glory—but bruised for the sins of My people."

The Fourth Sorrowful Mystery



The Carrying of His Cross - Patience

And bearing his own cross, he went forth to that place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew Golgotha. Where they crucified him, and with him two others, one on each side, and Jesus in the midst. And Pilate wrote a title also, and he put upon the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. (John 19: 17 - 20)

4. Jesus Carries the Cross

Let us meditate upon Jesus Christ on the way to Calvary laden with His cross. He falls under the weight of this burden. To expiate sin, He wills to experience in His own flesh the oppression of sin. Fearing that Jesus will not reach the place of crucifixion alive, the Jews force Simon of Cyrene to help Christ to carry His cross, and Jesus accepts this assistance.

In this Simon represents all of us. As members of the Mystical Body of Christ, we should all help Jesus to carry His Cross. This is the one sure sign that we belong to Christ—if we carry our cross with Him.

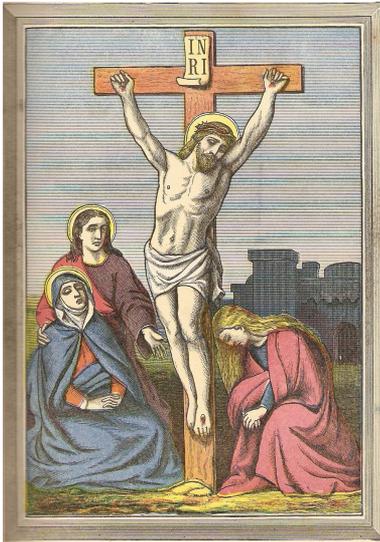
But while Jesus carried His cross, He merited for us the strength to bear our trials with generosity. He has placed in His cross a sweetness which makes ours bearable, for when we carry our cross it is really His that we receive. For Christ unites with His own the sufferings, sorrows, pains and burdens which we accept with love from His hand, and by this union He gives them an inestimable value, and they become a source of great merit for us.

It is above all His love for His Father which impels Christ to accept the sufferings of His Passion, but it is also the love which He bears us.

The Fifth Sorrowful Mystery

The Crucifixion and Death of Our Lord

But after they were come to Jesus, when they saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers with a spear opened his side, and immediately there came out blood and water. And he saw that it, hath given testimony; and his testimony is true. And he knoweth that he saith true; that you also believe. For these things were done, that the scripture might be fulfilled; "You shall not break a bone of him. Again another scripture saith: they shall look upon him whom they pierced. (St. John 19: 33-37)



5. Jesus Dies on the Cross

At the Last Supper, when the hour had come to complete His oblation of self, what did Christ say to His Apostles who were gathered around Him? "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And this is the love, surpassing all loves, which Jesus shows us; for, as St. Paul says, "It is for us all that He is delivered up." What greater proof of love could He have given us? None.

Hence the Apostle declares without ceasing that "because He loved us, Christ delivered Himself up for us," and "because of the love He bears for me, He gave Himself up for me."

"Delivered," "given"—to what extent? Even to the death on the cross! What enhances this love immeasurably is the sovereign liberty with which Christ delivered Himself up: "He offered Himself because He willed it." These words tell us how spontaneously Jesus accepted His Passion. This freedom with which Jesus delivered Himself up to death for us is one of the aspects of His sacrifice which touch our human hearts most profoundly.

*Adapted with illustrations and scriptural text, October 2009
St. Dominic Savio Chapel, Freeland MI*