

DAY 42: Contemplation**TRIBUNALS: TRIALS OF JESUS [208]****Placing Oneself in the Presence of God***Preparatory Prayer:*

[46] ...to ask grace of God our Lord, that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be purely ordered to the service and praise of His Divine Majesty.

History:

See the history that we find in the four Gospels that speak to us clearly, some emphasizing some aspect, some nuance of the tribunals, of the dialogue, of the presentation of Christ, of the tenor of the accusations, etc., but basically the four narrate with great detail this moment of the Passion of Christ.

Composition of Place:

Fundamentally we find two settings, on the one hand, next to the Temple, where the Sanhedrin gathers, and on the other hand the Praetorium, the place where Pontius Pilate lived and exercised his authority as governor and as judge, where we find the place, the environment, the dialogues between Pilate and Our Lord and, joined to that, the Praetorium which opened onto a small square where that multitude gathers with which Pilate dialogues presenting to them Our Lord.

Petition:

[203] ... it is proper to ask in the Passion, sorrow with Christ sorrowful, affliction with Christ afflicted, tears, interior pain for so much pain that Christ passed through for me.

Points For Meditation

Christ is taken as a defendant before the religious tribunal, before the political tribunal, and before the popular tribunal; in all He is condemned. Paradoxically, as the saying says, "*the devil makes the pot, but forgets to put the lid on it,*" one always sees the trace of evil and how the wisdom of God is justified in His works. In each tribunal there is condemnation, and at the same time something that manifests the truth.

- Religious tribunal → condemns Him after He affirms He is the Messiah
- Political tribunal → condemns Him while declaring Him just
- Popular tribunal → condemns Him while recognizing Him as innocent

Before the religious tribunal, Christ is condemned after having shown and said clearly that He is the Messiah, the Son of God. It seems an absurdity: the tribunal that had to prepare the people of Israel and show the Messiah who had come now has the Messiah before them. He affirms clearly that He is the Messiah and that He is the eternal Son of God, and He is condemned to death.

Before the political tribunal, Christ is condemned in spite of the fact that Pilate clearly says that he considers Him a just man.

- Pilate affirms → He is a just man
- Pilate's wife warns → she has suffered because of this just man
- Pilate acknowledges → not even Herod has found guilt in Him

And nevertheless:

- **He is condemned**

Before the popular tribunal, the same reality appears. The people recognize Him as innocent, because they choose the one who was guilty and a bandit, Barabbas.

- The choice:
 - Barabbas → guilty
 - Christ → innocent

Pilate asks:

“Shall I crucify your King who has done nothing bad, who is innocent?”

And yet:

- **He is condemned also here**

Before the tribunals, Christ Our Lord assumes the suffering of all those who are unjustly persecuted, of all the innocents, the just who have suffered slander, false processes, and different ways of injustice.

- He assumes:
 - The suffering of the innocent
 - The suffering of the persecuted
 - The suffering caused by injustice

At the same time:

- Without having been guilty
- Being absolutely innocent
- Being the Just One of God
- Being the Messiah, the Son of God
- Without any participation in sin

He assumes:

- The penalty
- The punishment
- The consequences of sin

Thus:

- That suffering may serve:
 - For remedy
 - For purification for sins
 - To restore order
 - To attain salvation

Of the three tribunals, this meditation centers on the religious tribunal, on the Sanhedrin, because of the importance that it has and because of the flagrant contradiction between how it acts and what its mission was.

- Its mission:
 - To guide the chosen people
 - To point out the Messiah
- Its action:
 - To reject Him
 - To condemn Him

They have before them the one who was their reason for being, and nevertheless they reject Him. This contradiction is evident and profound.

- It is:
 - An image of our own attitude
 - An image of our sin

As the Letter to the Hebrews says:

“Condemn again the Son of God and trample that blood that redeemed us.”

The members of the Sanhedrin, particularly the Pharisees, had already noticed that Jesus is the Savior. Saint John recounts that they had already decided His death.

After the resurrection of Lazarus:

“What are we doing? because this man performs many signs. If we let Him continue like this, all will believe in Him... from that day they decided to put Him to death.”

And also:

“The chief priests decided to put Lazarus also to death since because of him many Jews were leaving them and believing in Jesus.”

- They saw the signs
- They saw the miracles
- They saw the resurrection

And yet:

- They decided to put Him to death

They wanted to hear from His own lips that He was the Christ, not to know the truth, but as Saint Bede says: “They did not desire to know the truth but to prepare the calumny.”

They expected a Messiah who would restore the greatness of King David, who would manifest glory and power.

- For them:
 - Messiah → power
 - Messiah → glory
 - Messiah → triumph

Therefore, seeing Christ:

- As prisoner
- Abandoned by His friends



- Beaten
- Humiliated

For them meant:

- A confession of defeat
- A confession of false testimony

Because:

- The Cross did not enter into their calculations
- The relation Messiah–Cross was:
 - Absurd
 - Impossible

The Sanhedrin was constituted by three great groups:

- Elders
- Chief priests
- Scribes

Each represented an essential aspect of the gifts given by God to prepare the people of Israel for the coming of the Messiah.

- Elders:
 - Represent the chosen people
 - The divine election
- Chief priests:
 - Represent worship and sacrifice
 - Teach how to adore, give thanks, and ask forgiveness
 - Anticipate the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ
- Scribes (Pharisees):
 - Represent the Law
 - The Scriptures
 - The prophecies

Each of these:

- Was ordered toward Christ

However, each one acts as if its sphere were its own, separated from Christ.

- They separate:
 - Election from Christ
 - Worship from Christ
 - Law from Christ

And thus:

- They lose these gifts

Historically:

- The Temple is destroyed
- The ancient worship ceases

Now:

- The worship is:

- The sacrifice of Christ on the Cross

The Pharisees, interpreting the Law according to their own criteria, have a “veil” that does not allow them to see reality.

- Without Christ:
 - The Law becomes sterile
 - The Scriptures become dry
 - Everything loses meaning

Christ is condemned for being the Messiah and for being the Son of God. The central question is His identity: who is He?

The High Priest asks:

“Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, the Son of God?”

And Jesus answers:

“Yes, I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the power of God and coming among the clouds of heaven.”

Then:

“You have heard the blasphemy.”

And all judge:

- That He is guilty of death

They seek testimony against Him:

- Many give false testimony
- The testimonies do not coincide

“Many were giving false testimony against Him, but the testimonies did not coincide.”

Thus:

- The process is groundless

What prevented them from accepting the truth was not:

- Not seeing miracles
- Not hearing Christ
- Not experiencing His greatness

They had:

- Seen healings
- Seen expulsions of demons
- Seen the resurrection of Lazarus
- Heard His words
- Argued with Him

What prevented them was:

“They loved more the glory of men than the glory of God.”

Finally:

“And rising up all of them, they brought Him before Pilate”



Thus:

- They make a pact
- They submit

To:

- The devil
- The world
- The flesh
- Sin

From all this, Jesus Christ has liberated us with His bitter and painful Passion, of which one part, and not the least important, has been His appearance before the tribunals, particularly the religious tribunal.

Colloquy:

May our attentive consideration, with the light of the Holy Spirit and the interior grace of our will, help us to understand how much Jesus has done for me, and, loving Him, I may ask myself and decide what I must do for Him, and that which I must suffer for Him.

Let us ask the Most Blessed Virgin Mary to grant to all of us this grace in this contemplation and in these Spiritual Exercises. Pray a *Hail Mary*.