



## DAY #45: Contemplation

### CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH [296, 297]

For those who are following these exercises online in Lent, today is Good Friday. Let us now consider the Passion and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Hail Mary...Our Lady of Sorrows..*

#### PLACE ONESELF IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD:

[75] - *I will stand for the space of an **Our Father**, a step or two before the place where I am to meditate or contemplate, and with my mind raised on high, consider that God our Lord beholds me, etc. Then I will make an act of reverence or humility.*

**PREPARATORY PRAYER:** [46] – *I will beg God our Lord for grace that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to the praise and service of His Divine Majesty.*

#### Preludes

**HISTORY** - *This is the history of the mystery. Here, we can recall that, after Jesus was scourged, He went back to Pilate. Pilate presented Him to the crowd, but they shouted for His death, and so the governor ordered Christ to be crucified along with two criminals. They placed the cross upon Him, and made Him carry it out to Calvary, where He was crucified.*

**Biblical References** → Mt 27; Mk 15; Lk 23; Jn 19 (*We read chapters 18-19 of St. John in the Good Friday Liturgy*).

**COMPOSITION OF PLACE** - *This is to see the place. Here we can consider the Praetorium, where Jesus was condemned, and then the path to Calvary, and Calvary itself. The walk would have been a third, but not more than a half, mile away, some 1,300 steps. A trumpeter would have led the way, while a herald would have announced the name of the criminal led to execution. A centurion mounted on horseback guiding the procession. Calvary was a hill near the city but outside it, and it was the custom of the Romans to execute criminals there.*

**GRACE/PETITION\*\*[203]:** *This is to ask for what I desire. In the Passion it is proper to ask for **sorrow with Christ in sorrow, anguish with Christ in anguish, tears and deep grief** because of the great affliction Christ endures for me.*

#### POINTS FROM THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

[194] **1<sup>st</sup> Point:** *This is to **see** the **persons***

**2<sup>nd</sup> Point:** *This is to **listen** to their conversation, and likewise seek to draw fruit from it.*

**3<sup>rd</sup> Point:** *This is to see what they are **doing**, and to seek to draw some fruit from it.*

[195] **4<sup>th</sup> Point:** *This will be to consider what Christ our Lord **suffers in His human nature**, or according to the passage contemplated, what **he desires to suffer**. Then I will begin with great effort to strive to grieve, be sad, and weep. In this way I will labor through all the points that follow.*

[196] 5<sup>th</sup> Point: *This is to consider **how the divinity hides itself**; for example, it **could** destroy its enemies and does not do so, but leaves the most sacred humanity to suffer so cruelly.*

[197] 6<sup>th</sup> Point: *This is to consider that Christ **suffers all this for my sins**, and what **I ought to do** and suffer for Him.*

As a reference, St. Ignatius divides some of the events of the Passion in the following points:

### [296] From the House of Pilate to the Cross Inclusive ~ St. John 19, 13–22

*The Way of the Cross*

**Point 1** - Sitting in judgment, Pilate delivered up Jesus to be crucified after the Jews had denied that He was their king, saying, “We have no king but Caesar.”

**Point 2** - He carried the cross upon His shoulders, and when He was no longer able to do so, Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry it after Jesus.

**Point 2** - They crucified Him between two thieves. The title placed over the cross read: “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.”

### [297] Jesus Dies Upon the Cross ~ St. John 19, 23–37; St. Matthew 27, 35–52; St. Mark 15, 24–38; St. Luke 23, 34–46

*The Crucifixion*

**Point 1** - He spoke seven words upon the cross: He prayed for those who crucified Him; He pardoned the thief; He recommended St. John to His Mother; He said with a loud voice, “I thirst,” and they gave Him vinegar to drink; He said that He was forsaken; He said, “It is consummated”; He said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

**Point 2** - The sun was darkened, the rocks rent, the graves opened, and the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

**Point 3** - They blasphemed Him saying, “Thou who wouldst overthrow the temple . . . come down from the cross.” His garments were divided, His side was pierced with a lance, and blood and water came forth.

## INTRODUCTION

Calvary! The Cross! Behold the two most tragic words ever heard in this world, words that still resound today as vividly as on that first Good Friday. It is not the place, nor the instrument of torture, that gives them their profound meaning, but the sacred Victim immolated there: Christ, the Redeemer of humankind. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever; His sacrifice is likewise perpetual. The tragedy is not merely human; though it is indeed the most profoundly human event ever to exist, it is also divine—God Himself suffering and dying for man. For this reason, Calvary and the Cross, which until then were names signifying death, have from that Good Friday onward become the true symbols of immortal life.

Yet Calvary and the Cross are life only for those who come to be crucified with Christ. For all others, the Cross is a stumbling block for Jews and folly for Gentiles (**1 Cor 1:23**). It is therefore necessary to unite ourselves so completely with Christ in these mysteries that we can truly exclaim with Saint Paul: “*Christo confixus sum cruci*” (I have been crucified with Christ) and then add with him, “*vivo ego, iam non ego, vivit vero in me Christus*” (It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me) (**Gal 2:19-20**). To

this, the entire mystery of the redemption and sanctification of mankind is reduced. The grace to penetrate and live this mystery must come from contemplation.

### POINTS OF MEDITATION

When we look at the Cross, what can we say? We see our Redeemer, Christ our Lord, Christ the King mounted on His throne. We see the Great Teacher preaching His greatest sermon. We see our God, pouring out His life for us on the Cross. Let us contemplate Him. What follows are some ideas to help orientate your meditation. If they are helpful, great. If you prefer to consider others, that is also okay. The point is to consider the Passion and Death of our Lord, and to speak with Him intimately in prayer. What follows are considerations on three points: 1- Jesus on the way to Calvary. 2 – Jesus' crucifixion, and finally 3 – Jesus' death on the cross.

#### POINT 1 – THE VIA CRUCIS (*THE WAY OF THE CROSS*)

After the sham trial has come to a conclusion, the cowardly Pilate handed our Lord over to be crucified. We read in St. John that Christ *bore His own cross*. Our blessed Lord, who had taught so many times the necessity of bearing one's cross in order to follow Him, now takes His own; it would not have been too tall, about twice the height of an average man, eleven or twelve feet tall. Jesus now sets out as the mob walks along, mocking and jeering Him, as He sets out flanked by two criminals: *and was numbered with the transgressors* (Is 53:12). See our Lord, racked with pain, crowned with thorns, burdened with this heavy cross, the *man of sorrows* (Is 53:3), trampled on by His own people, who *received Him not* (cf. Jn 1:11).

(cf. St. John Paul II, *Sign of Contradiction*)

Sustained only by divine assistance, greatly weakened from His scourging and loss of blood, He falls under the weight of the cross, the heavy wood crushing Him to the ground, re-igniting the stinging agony of the wounds that covered His entire body. Our Lord is true God, but also true man, and here we see this clearly. He walks through the narrow streets of Jerusalem, and on the way He meets His most Blessed Mother; the soldiers prevent them from speaking words, but what a sharing of hearts this must have been. She is our model, to walk with the Lord, to suffer with Him, to be with Christ. Fearful that He may not make it, they compel a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, to help Jesus. Do I carry the cross with Christ? Am I compelled to take up the cross? Or do I embrace it with joy, seeing that although it may appear heavy, underneath there is a great sweetness? St. Augustine wrote: my love is my burden. Let us consider this – **Love not only uplifts us, takes us out of ourselves; it also lays burdens on us.** (JP2) To love, is to sacrifice. To love, is to carry the cross. To love, is to march with Christ to calvary.

Veronica then emerges from the crowd, a true historical character, and goes to our Lord to wipe His Sacred Face. Christ falls again; the soldiers mock and the crowd jeers. He teaches us that falls are part of the human condition, part of our Christian life; the work is that we rise up and continue. There is a great number of women, beating their breasts and wailing for Him. Jesus – always thinking of consoling others – turns to them to comfort them. Finally, they arrive, a walk of no more than half a mile, but an excruciating agony of torment and trial. Christ goes step by step, teaching us how to carry our Crosses, with serenity and resignation to the will of God.

#### POINT 2 – THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST

They arrived to the place of the Skull, Golgotha, a small mount outside the city walls. <sup>11</sup> *For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp.* <sup>12</sup> *Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood.* <sup>13</sup> *Let us then go to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured.* (Heb 12:11-13)

The cross was laid down on the ground, and our Lord climbs upon the altar of our salvation. They then nailed His precious hands and feet to the cross. The cross would have prefixed holes where the soldiers would drive a nail nearly 9 inches long through our Lord's wrist, piercing the nerve bundle. His wounds were exposed.

*St. Bridget (69ff)*

Joyfully ascending, like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter, when he was on those steps, he extended his arm, not forced, but **voluntarily**, and opening his right hand, Laid it upon the cross, which his cruel torturers barbarously crucified, driving the nail through the part where the bone was most solid. Then violently drawing his left hand with a rope, they affixed it to the cross in a similar manner. Then stretching his body beyond all bounds, they fastened his joined feet to the cross with two nails, and so violently extended those glorious limbs on the cross, that all the nerves and veins were fairly broken. This done, they replaced on his head the crown of thorns, which they had taken off while affixing him to the cross, and fastened it on his most sacred head. It so wounded his venerable head, that his eyes were filled with the blood that flowed down. His ears, too, were reclosed, and his face and beard, as it were, covered and stained with that rosy blood. ...

Then his lovely and beautiful eyes took the **hue of death**; his mouth **opened** and appeared **full of blood**; his countenance pallid and sunken, livid and blood-stained; his body also was all livid and pallid, and very languid from the constant stream of flowing blood. The skin also, and virginal flesh of that most holy body, was so delicate and tender, that a livid welt appeared from the slightest blow.

<sup>14</sup> *I am poured out like water,  
and all my bones are out of joint;  
my heart is like wax;  
it is melted within my breast;*  
<sup>15</sup> *my mouth<sup>[a]</sup> is dried up like a potsherd,  
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;  
you lay me in the dust of death. (Ps 22:14-15)*

Who suffers? It is the “only-begotten”, the “beloved”, the “chosen”. (cf. Mt 3:17, etc.) (JP2)

*The bystanders and Jewish authorities mock Him: <sup>39</sup> **Those who passed by derided<sup>[b]</sup> him, shaking their heads** <sup>40</sup> *and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”* <sup>41</sup> *In the same way the **chief priests** also, along with the **scribes and elders**, were **mocking him**, saying, <sup>42</sup> **“He saved others; he cannot save himself.”** <sup>43</sup> *He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. <sup>43</sup> He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, **‘I am God’s Son.’**”* (Mt 27:39-43)**

***But I am a worm, and not human;  
scorned by others, and despised by the people.***

<sup>7</sup> **All who see me mock at me;**  
*they make mouths at me, they shake their heads (Ps 22:6-7)*

*“My people, what have I done to you? Or how have I grieved you? Answer me!  
I opened up the sea before you, and you opened my side with a lance.  
I went before you in a pillar of cloud, and you led me into Pilate’s place.  
I fed you with manna in the desert, and on me you rained blows and lashes.  
I gave you saving water from the rock to drink, and for drink you gave me gall and vinegar.  
I struck down for you the kings of the Canaanites, and you struck my head with a reed.  
I put in your hand a royal scepter, and you put on my head a crown of thorns.  
I exalted you with great power, and you hung me on the scaffold of the Cross.”  
(The Good Friday Reproaches)*

*(Shroud of Turin notes)*

What was our Lord’s time on the Cross? We can perhaps think of Him hanging there in great agony for three hours, but that is only the beginning. What was happening? In the “down” position, our Lord was unable to breathe. How to breath? He would need to push on the feet and flex elbows adducting the shoulders; this would put all weight of the body on **tarsals** (ankles) and produce searing pain; flexion of the elbows would cause fiery pain along the damaged median nerves; each breathing effort would becoming agonizing and tiring.

We can see Christ the victim, undergoing the agonizing pain to atone for our sins, but do we see Christ the **priest**? Look at Him, enter into His sacred Heart. He is **offering the** sacrifice, the total oblation of Himself to God. We see the victim, but let us also see the Priest:

*I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what **stress** I am under [great is my anguish/ what constraint I am under/] until it is completed! (Lk 12:50)*

*“I have **eagerly** desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; (Lk 22:15)*

*<sup>17</sup>For this reason the Father loves me, because **I lay down my life in order** to take it up again. <sup>18</sup>No one takes<sup>[a]</sup> it from me, but **I lay it down of my own accord**. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.” (Jn 10:17)*

*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. (Jn 3:16)*

### POINT 3 – CHRIST DIES ON THE CROSS

The land was covered in darkness from noon until three in the afternoon, as our Christ suffers on the cross.

*(St. Bridget)*

*Sometimes he endeavored to stretch himself upon the cross, from the **excessive bitterness** of the intense and acute pain that he endured; for some times the pain from his members and pierced veins ascended to his **heart**, and tortured him cruelly with **intense martyrdom**, and thus his death was prolonged and dilated, with great torment and bitterness. Overcome by the excessive intensity of pain, and about to expire, he cried to his Father in a loud and mournful*

voice, saying: "O Father, why hast thou forsaken me?" Then his lips were pallid, and his tongue blood-stained; his belly collapsed and clinging to his back, as though he had no bowels within him. Again, then, he cried out in great grief and anguish: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;" and then his head was raised a little, then sank, and he gave up the ghost.

.<sup>51</sup> At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth **shook**, and the rocks were split. <sup>52</sup>The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. <sup>53</sup>After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. (Mt 27:51-53)

And the centurion, the leader of the execution? "Truly this man was God's Son (was innocent) (Mt 27:54)

Let us look upon our Savior's body, dead on the cross, He has given His life for me. His most sacred Heart is pierced and out comes blood and water. He has drunk the chalice to the last drop. He has loved us to the end.

As Our Lord asked James and John in the Gospel, so He asks each of us: *Can you drink the chalice that I am to drink?* (Mt 20:22) But let us note what He said before: *You do not know what you are asking.* We don't know exactly what our "chalice" will be. That isn't the point. Our Lord invites us to take up our cross, whatever it is, and follow Him in a spirit of truth, in a spirit of faith. From where will come our strength? In the fact that He has gone ahead of us first. We follow our **captain**.

As we stare at the Cross, let us recall the great liturgy of Good Friday. What can we say on this day? On Good Friday, the Church remains **silent**. We are **silent** because we find no words to fit the occasion (JP2). But **silence** is best – let us listen to the wood of the cross.

## COLLOQUY

[198] Close with a colloquy to Christ our Lord, who suffered His Passion and Death for me.

Talk to Him. Open your heart up to Him. Ask Him for grace. Be open to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

With a dialogue I will speak with Him, and renew my petition:

*sorrow with Christ in sorrow,  
anguish with Christ in anguish,  
tears and deep grief  
because of the great affliction Christ endures for me.*

Also, I can reflect on myself and ask...

***What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What will I do for Christ?***

[199;147;157]



May God bless you.