

THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

BY

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THE POWER OF THE PASSION OF JESUS
CHRIST
TO ENKINDLE THE DIVINE LOVE IN
EVERY HEART

FROM THE ASCETICAL WORKS OF
ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI
Volume II:
*THE WAY OF SALVATION AND OF
PERFECTION*

WITH

***A SERMON ON THE PASSION OF
JESUS CHRIST***

FROM THE ASCETICAL WORKS OF
ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI
Volume XVII: *MISCELLANY*

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I. What the Passion of Jesus Christ has Done for God

and for Us

[331] Father Balthasar Alvarez, a great servant of God, used to say that we must not think we have made any progress in the way of God until we have come to keep Jesus crucified ever in our heart. And St. Francis de Sales said that "the love which is not the offspring of the Passion is feeble." Yes, because we cannot have a more powerful motive for loving God than the Passion of

Jesus Christ, by which we know that the
Eternal Father,
to manifest to us his exceeding love for
us, was pleased
to send his only begotten Son upon earth
to die for us
sinners. Whence the Apostle says that
God, through
the excess of love with which he loved
us, willed that the
death of his Son should convey life to us:
*For His exceeding
love with which he loved us, even when
we were dead
in sins, has given us life together in
Christ.*¹ And this
was precisely the expression used by
Moses and Elijah on
Mount Tabor, in speaking of the Passion
of Jesus Christ.
They did not know how to give it any
other description
than an excess of love: *And they spoke of
His excess,
which He should consummate in
Jerusalem.*²

When our Savior came into the world,
the shepherds

¹ "Propter nimiam charitatem suam, qua dilexit nos, cum essemus mortui peccatis, convivificavit nos in Christo." Eph. 2.4.

² "Et dicebant excessum ejus, quem completurus erat in Jerusalem."

Luke 9.31. ["excessum" also means "departure" or "death" - Ed.]

[332] heard the angels singing, *Glory to God in the highest.*¹

But the humiliation of the Son of God in

becoming man,
through his love for man, might have
seemed rather to
obscure than to manifest the divine glory;
but no; there
was no means by which the glory of God
could have
been better manifested to the world than
by Jesus Christ
dying for the salvation of mankind, since
the Passion of
Jesus Christ has made us know how great
is the mercy
of God, in that a God was willing to die
to save sinners,
and to die, moreover, by a death so
painful and degrading.
St. John Chrysostom says that the
Passion of Jesus Christ
was not an ordinary suffering, nor his
death a simple death
like that of other men.²

It has made us know the divine wisdom.
Had our
Redeemer been merely God, he could not
have made
satisfaction for man; for God could not
make satisfac-
tion to himself in place of man; nor could
God make
satisfaction by means of suffering, being
impassible. On
the other hand, had he been merely man,
man could not
have made satisfaction for the grievous
injury done by
him to the divine majesty. What, then,
did God do?
He sent his very own Son, true God with

the Father, to
take human flesh, so that as man he
might by his death
pay the debt due to the divine justice, and
as God might
make to it full satisfaction.

*It has, moreover, made us know how
great is the divine
justice.* St. John Chrysostom says that
God reveals to us
the greatness of his justice, not so much
by hell in which
he punishes sinners, as by the sight of
Jesus on the cross;
since in hell creatures are punished for
the sins of their
own, but on the cross we behold a God
cruelly treated
in order to make satisfaction for the sins
of men. What
obligation had Jesus Christ to die for us?
He was offered

1 "Gloria in altissimis Deo." Luke 2.14.

2 "Non passio communis, non mors simplex, morti
similis." *De Passione*,
sermon 6.

[333] *because it was His own will.*¹ He
might have justly
abandoned man to his perdition; but his
love for us would
not let him see us lost; and so he chose
to give him-
self up to so painful a death in order to
obtain for us
salvation: *He has loved us, and delivered
Himself up for
us.*² From all eternity he had loved man:
I have loved you

*with an everlasting love.*³ But then,
seeing that his
justice obliged him to condemn him, and
to keep him at
a distance separated from himself in hell,
his mercy urged
him to find out a way by which he might
be able to save
him. But how? By making satisfaction
himself to the
divine justice by his own death. And
consequently he
willed that there should be affixed to the
cross on which
he died the sentence of condemnation to
eternal death
which man had merited, in order that it
might remain
there cancelled in his blood. *Blotting out
the writing of
the decree that was against us, which was
contrary to us,
He has taken the same out of the way,
fastening it to the
cross.*⁴ And thus, through the merits of
his own blood, he
pardons all our sins: *Forgiving you all
offences.*⁵ And at
the same time he spoiled the devils of the
rights they had
acquired over us, carrying along with
him in triumph as
well our enemies as ourselves, who were
their prey. *And
despoiling the principalities and powers,
He has exposed
them confidently in open show,
triumphing over them in Him-
self.*⁶ On which Theophylact comments,
"As a conqueror in

- 1 "Oblatus est, quia ipse voluit." Isa. 53.7.
2 "Dilexit nos, et tradidit semetipsum pro nobis."
Eph. 5.2.
3 "In charitate perpetua dilexi te." Jer. 31.3.
4 "Delens quod adversus nos erat chirographum
decreti, quod erat
contrarium nobis, et ipsum tulit de medio, affigens
illud cruci." Col. 2.14.
5 "Donans vobis omnia delicta." Col. 2.13.
6 "Et expolians principatus et potestates, traduxit eos
confidenter palam
triumphans in semetipso." Col. 2.15.

[334] triumph, carrying with him the
booty and the enemy."1
Hence, when satisfying the divine justice
on the cross,
Jesus Christ speaks only of mercy. He
prays his Father
to have mercy on the very Jews who had
contrived his
death, and on his murderers who were
putting him to
death: *Father, forgive them, for they know
not what they
do.*2 While He was on the cross, instead
of punishing the
two thieves, who had just before reviled
him, *And they that
were crucified with Him reviled Him,*3 -
when he heard
one asking for mercy, *Lord, remember
me when You shall
come into Your kingdom,*4 - overflowing
with mercy, he
promises him Paradise that very day:
*This day you shall be
with me in Paradise.*5 Then, before he
expired, he gave to
us, in the person of John his own mother
to be our mother:
He said to the disciple, Behold your

*mother.*⁶ There upon
the cross he declares himself content in
having done
everything to obtain salvation for us, and
he makes perfect
the sacrifice by his death: *Afterwards*
Jesus, knowing
that all things were now
accomplished, . . . said, 'It is
finished'; and bowing His head, He gave
*up his spirit.*⁷

And behold, by the death of Jesus Christ,
man is set
free from sin and from the power of the
devil; and, more-
over, is raised to grace, and to a greater
degree of grace
than Adam lost: *And where sin abounded,*
says St. Paul,

1 Quasi victor ac triumphator circumvehens secum
praedam et
hostes in triumphum.

2 "Pater, dimitte illis; non enim sciunt quid faciunt."
Luke 23.34.

3 "Et qui cum eo crucifixi erant, convitiabantur ei."
Mark 15.32.

4 "Domine, memento mei, cum veneris in regnum
tuum." Luke 23.42.

5 "Hodie mecum eris in paradiso." Luke 23.43.

6 "Dixit discipulo: Ecce Mater tua." John 19.27.

7 "Postea, sciens Jesus quia omnia consummata
sunt . . . dixit :

Consummatum est. Et inclinato capite, tradidit
spiritum." John 19.28.

[335] *grace did more abound.*¹ It remains
therefore for us,
writes the Apostle, to have frequent
recourse with all confi-
dence to this throne of grace, which Jesus
crucified exactly

is, in order to receive from his mercy the
grace of salvation,
together with aid to overcome the
temptations of the world
and of hell. *Let us go therefore with
confidence to the
throne of grace, that we may obtain
mercy, and find
grace in time of need.*²

Ah, my Jesus, I love You above all
things, and whom
would I wish to love if I love not You,
who are infinite
goodness, and who have died for me?
Would that I
could die of grief every time I think how
I had driven
You away from my soul by my sins, and
separated my-
self from You, who are my only good,
and who have
loved me so much. *Who shall separate us
from the love
of Christ?*³ It is sin only that can separate
me from
You. But I hope, in the blood You have
shed for me,
that You will never allow me to separate
myself from
Your love, and to lose Your grace, which
I prize more
than every other good. I give myself
wholly to You.
Do accept me, and draw all my affections
to Yourself,
so that I may love none but You.

II. What the Passion of Jesus Christ Requires of Us

Does Jesus Christ, perhaps, claim too
much in wish-
ing us to give ourselves wholly to him,
after he has
given to us all his blood and his life, in
dying for us
upon the cross? *The love of Christ impells*
*us.*⁴ Let

1 "Ubi autem abundavit delictum, superabundavit
gratia." Rom. 5.20.

2 "Adeamus ergo cum fiducia ad thronum gratiae, ut
misericordiam
consequamur, et gratiam inveniamus in auxilio
opportune." Heb. 4.16.

3 "Quis enim nos separabit a charitate Christi?"
Rom. 8.35.

4 "Charitas enim Christi urget nos." 2 Cor. 5.14.

[336] us hear what St. Francis de Sales
says upon these
words: "To know that Jesus has loved us
unto death, and
even death on the cross, is not this to feel
our hearts con-
strained by a violence which is the
stronger in proportion
to its loveliness?" And then he adds, "My
Jesus gives
himself all to me, and I give myself all to
him. On his
bosom will I live and die. Neither death
nor life shall
ever separate me from him."¹

It was for this end, says St. Paul, that
Jesus Christ
died, that each of us should no longer
live to the world
nor to himself, but to Him alone who has
given himself

wholly to us. *And Christ died for all, that they who live may not now live for themselves, but for Him who died for them.*² He who lives for the world seeks to please the world; he who lives for himself seeks to please himself; but he who lives for Jesus Christ seeks only to please Jesus Christ, and fears only to displease him. His only joy is to see him loved; his only sorrow, to see him despised. This is to live for Jesus Christ; and this is what he claims from each one of us. I repeat, does he claim too much from us, after having given us his blood and his life?

Why, then, O my God! do we employ our affections in loving creatures, relatives, friends, the great ones of the world, who have never suffered for us scourges, thorns, or nails, nor shed one drop of blood for us; and not in loving a God, who for love of us came down from heaven and was made man, and has shed all his blood for us in the midst of torments, and finally died of grief upon a cross, in order to win to himself our hearts! Moreover, in order to unite himself more close-

ly to us, he has left himself, after his death, upon our altars, where he makes himself one with us, that we

1 *Love of God*, Bk. 7, ch. 8.

2 "Pro omnibus mortuus est Christus, ut et qui vivunt, jam non sibi vivant, sed ei qui pro ipsis mortuus est." 2 Cor. 5.15.

[337] might understand how burning is the love with which he loves us? "He has mingled himself with us," exclaims St. John Chrysostom, "that we may be one and the same thing; for this is the desire of those who ardently love."¹ And St. Francis de Sales, speaking of Holy Communion, adds: "There is no action in which we can think of our Savior as more tender or more loving than this, in which he, as it were, annihilates himself, and reduces himself to food, in order to unite himself to the hearts of his faithful."

But how is it, O Lord! that I, after having been loved by You to such an excess, have had the heart to despise You? According to Your just reproach, *I have nourished and brought up children, and they have despised me.*² I have dared to turn my back upon You, in order to

gratify my senses. *You have cast me
behind Your back.*³

I have dared to drive You from my soul,
The wicked
*have said to God, Depart from us.*⁴ I have
dared to afflict
that heart of Yours which has loved me
so much. And
what, then, am I now to do? Ought I to
be distrustful
of Your mercy? I curse the days in which
I have dis-
honored You. Oh, if only I had died a
thousand times,
O my Savior, rather than that I had ever
offended
You! O Lamb of God! You have bled to
death upon
the cross to wash away our sins in Your
blood. O sin-
ners! what would you not pay on the day
of judgment
for one drop of the blood of this Lamb?
O my Jesus!
have pity on me, and pardon me; but You
know
my weakness; take, then, my will, that it
may never
more rebel against You. Expel from me
all love that
is not for You. I choose You alone for
my treasure

1 "Semetipsum nobis immiscuit, ut unum quid
simus; ardentem
enim amantium hoc est." *Ad pop. Ant. hom.* 61.

2 "Filiis enutrivit et exaltavit; ipsi autem spreverunt
me." Is. 1.2.

3 "Projecisti me post corpus tuum." Ezek. 23.35.

4 "Qui dixerunt Deo: Recede a nobis." Job 21.14.

[338] and my only good. You are

sufficient for me; and
I desire no other good apart from You.
*The God of my
heart, and God is my portion forever.*¹

O little sheep, beloved of God (so used
St. Teresa to
call the Blessed Virgin), who are the
Mother of the di -
vine Lamb, recommend me to your Son.
You, after
Jesus, are my hope; for you are the hope
of sinners.
To your hands I entrust my eternal
salvation. *Spes nos-
tra, salve.*

III. A Sweet Consideration for Souls that Love God, at the Sight of Jesus Crucified

I. SUFFERINGS OF JESUS ON THE CROSS

Jesus on the cross! O stupendous sight
for heaven
and earth of mercy and of love! To see
the Son of
God dying through pain upon a cross of
infamy, con-
demned as a malefactor to so bitter and
shameful a
death, in order to save sinful men from
the penalty that
was due to them! This sight has ever
been, and will
always be, the subject of the
contemplation of the saints,
and has led them willingly to renounce

all the goods of
the earth, and to embrace with great
courage sufferings
and death, that they might make
themselves more pleas-
ing to a God who died for love of them.
The sight of
Jesus despised between two thieves has
made them love
contempt far more than worldings have
loved the hon-
ors of the world. Beholding Jesus
covered with wounds
upon the cross, they hold in abhorrence
the pleasures of
sense, and have endeavored to afflict
their flesh in order
to unite their sufferings to the sufferings
of the Cruci-
fied. Beholding the patience of our
Savior in his
death, they have joyfully accepted the
most painful sick-
nesses, and even the most cruel torments
that tyrants

1 "Deus cordis mei, et pars mea Deus in aeternum."
Ps. 72.26.

[339] can inflict. Lastly, from beholding
the love of Jesus
Christ in being willing to sacrifice his life
for us in a
sea of sorrows, they have sought to
sacrifice to him all
that they had, possessions, children, and
even life itself.

St. Paul, in speaking of the love which
the Eternal

Father has borne towards us, in that,
when he saw us
dead by reason of sin, he willed to restore
life to us
by sending his Son to die for us, calls it
too great a love.

*But God, who is rich in mercy for his
exceeding love with
which He loved us, has given us life
together in Christ.*¹

And in the same way ought we to call the
love with which
Jesus Christ has willed to die for us too
great a love.

Hence the same apostle says, *We preach
Jesus Christ*

*crucified, unto the Jews indeed a
stumbling-block, and to
the Gentiles, foolishness.*² St. Paul says
that the death of

Jesus Christ appeared to the Jews a
stumbling-block, be-
cause they thought that he should have
appeared on earth
full of worldly majesty, and not indeed as
one condemned
to die like a criminal upon a cross. On
the other hand, to
the Gentiles it seemed a folly that a God
should be will-
ing to die, and by such a death too, for
his creatures.

On this subject St. Laurence Justinian
remarks: "We
have seen Him who is wise infatuated
through an excess
of love."³ We have beheld Him who is
the eternal wis-
dom itself, the Son of God, become a
fool for us, by

reason of the too great love which he bore towards us.

And does it not seem a folly for a God, almighty and supremely happy in himself, to be willing of his own

1 "Deus autem, qui dives est in misericordia, propter nimiam charitatem suam qua dilexit nos, et cum essemus mortui peccatis, convivificavit nos in Christo." Eph. 2.4.

2 "Praedicamus Christum crucifixum, Judaeis quidem scandalum, Gentibus autem stultitiam." 1 Cor. 1.23.

3 "Vidimus sapientiam amoris nimietate infatuatam." *Serm. de Nat. Dom.*

[340] accord to subject himself to be scourged, treated as a mock king, buffeted, spit upon in the face, condemned to die as a malefactor, abandoned by all upon a cross of shame, and this to save the miserable worms he himself had created? The loving St. Francis, when he thought of this, went about the country exclaiming with tears, "Love is not loved! Love is not loved!" And hence St. Bonaventure says that he who wishes to keep his love for Jesus Christ ought always to represent him to himself hanging on the cross and dying there for us. "Let him ever have before the eyes of his heart Christ dying upon the cross."¹

Oh, happy is that soul which frequently sets before its eyes Jesus dying on the cross, and stops to contemplate with tenderness the pains which Jesus has suffered, and the love with which he offered himself to the Father, while he lay agonizing on that bed of sorrow. Souls that love God, when they find themselves more than usually harassed by temptations of the devil and by fears about their eternal salvation, derive great comfort by considering in silence and alone Jesus hanging on the cross, and shedding blood from all his wounds. At the sight of the crucifix, all desires for the goods of this world flee utterly away. From that cross exhales a heavenly breath, which causes us to forget all earthly objects, and enkindles within us a holy desire of quitting all things, in order to employ all our affections in loving that Lord who has pleased to die through love for us.

Isaiah foretold that our Redeemer would be a man of sorrows. *And we have seen him . . . despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows.*² Now let him who wishes

to behold this man of sorrows, foretold
by Isaiah, look
on Jesus Christ dying on the cross. There,
nailed by his

1 *De perf. vit.* ch. 6.

2 "Vidimus eum . . . despectum, et novissimum
virorum, virum
dolorum." Isa. 53.2.

[341] hands and feet, he hangs, the whole
weight of his
body pressing on his wounds in all his
members, which
are every one of them torn and bruised.
He suffers con-
tinual and excruciating pains; whichever
way he turns,
so far from finding relief, his pain but
increases more
and more, until it deprives him of life;
and thus this
man of sorrows is condemned by the
Father to die of
sheer sufferings on account of our sins.

What Christian, then, O my Jesus!
knowing by faith
that You have died upon the cross for
love of him, can
live without loving You! Pardon me,
then, O Lord!
first of all, this great sin of having lived
so many years
in the world without loving You. My
beloved Savior,
the thought of death fills me with dread,
as being the
moment when I shall give an account to
You of all the
sins that I have committed against You;

but that blood
that I see flowing from Your wounds
causes me to hope
for pardon from You, and at the same
time the grace
of loving You for the future with my
whole heart, by
virtue of those merits You have earned
by so many
pains. I give myself wholly to You; I will
no longer be
my own; I desire to do all; I desire to
suffer in order to
please You. I will die for You who have
died for me:
I will say to You, with St. Francis, "May
I die for love
of the love of You, who didst vouchsafe
to die for love
of the love of me."¹

2. DEATH OF JESUS

*Father, into Your hands I commend my
spirit.*² These
words, uttered by Jesus Christ upon the
cross when he
was on the point of death, bring great
comfort to the

¹ Moriar amore amoris tui, qui amore amoris mei
dignatus es mori.

² "Pater, in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum."
Luke 23.46.

[342] dying, who find themselves
engaged in that last
combat with hell, and are about to pass
into eternity.

My beloved Jesus, I will not wait for the moment of my death to recommend my soul to You. From this moment I recommend it to You. By that blood shed for me, permit it not to be separated from You. Hence forth I will be Yours, and all Yours without reserve. If You seest that I should ever turn my back upon You, as I have in times past, I beseech You, let me die in this moment in which I hope to be in Your grace.

*In You, O Lord, have I hoped; I shall not be confounded forever.*¹ O faithful soul! lift up thine eyes, and look at the cross of your Redeemer, now dead for the love of you. Say to him:

O my Jesus! in Your flesh lacerated and torn by the scourges, the thorns, the nails, I behold the burning love You have borne me, and the ingratitude I have shown You; but Your blood is my hope. Wretch that I am, how often have I renounced Your grace, and have myself willed to condemn myself to hell. What would become of me if You had not chosen to die for me? I could die of grief every time I think of having

despised Your
infinite goodness, and of having of my
own accord ban-
ished and separated You from my soul.
But no; hence-
forth, with the help of Your grace, I will
leave all. Enough
for me to be united with You, my God
and my all!

O men, O men! how can you show such
contempt for
a God who has suffered so much for
you? Behold him
on that cross, how he sacrifices himself
by death to
pay for your sins, and to gain your
affections. My
Jesus, I will live no longer ungrateful for
such goodness.

O wounds of Jesus, wound me with love!
O blood of

1 "In te, Domine, speravi; non confundar in
aeternum." Ps. 30.2.

[343] Jesus, inebriate me with love! O
death of Jesus, make
me die to every affection which is not for
Jesus! I love
You more than myself, O my Jesus! and
there is no pain
that causes me more sorrow than the
thought of having
so often despised Your love. Accept me;
in Your mercy
reject me not, now that I give myself to
You without
reserve.

Behold, lastly, how our Savior,
overwhelmed with suf-
ferings upon the cross, bows his head,
and breathes forth
his soul: *And bowing His head, He gave
up his spirit.*¹

Eternal God, I, a wretched sinner, have
dishonored You
by my evil life; but Jesus Christ, in
making satisfaction
for me by his death, has abundantly
restored Your honor.
By the merits of Your Son, who have
died for me, have
pity on me.

O Jesus, my Savior! I see You now dead
on this
cross. You speak no more; You breath no
more;
because You have life no longer, having
willed to
lose it to give life to our souls. You have
no longer
any blood; for You have shed it all, by
dint of tor-
ments, to wash away our sins. In one
word, You have
abandoned Yourself to death through
Your love for us.

*He has loved us, and delivered Himself
for us.*² "Let
us consider," writes St. Francis de Sales,
"this divine
Savior stretched upon the cross, as upon
his altar of
honor, where he is dying of love for us;
but a love more
painful than that very death. Ah, why,

then, do we not
in spirit throw ourselves upon him to die
upon the cross
with him, who has willed to die there for
love of us? I
will hold him, we ought to say, and will
never let him
go. I will die with him, and be burned up
in the flames
of his love. One and the same fire shall
consume this
divine Creator and his miserable creature.
My Jesus is
all mine, and I am all his. I will live and
die upon his

1 "Et inclinato capite, tradidit spiritum." John 19.30.
2 "Dilexit nos, et tradidit semetipsum pro nobis."
Eph. 5.2.

[344] breast; neither death nor life shall
ever separate
him from me."1

Yes, my sweet Redeemer, I embrace with
tenderness
Your pierced feet; and, filled with
confidence in behold
ing You dead for love of me, I repent of
having de-
spised You, and I love You with my
whole soul. At
the foot of Your cross I leave You my
heart and my
will. Do You Yourself nail it to this
cross, so that it
may never be separated from You, and
henceforth may
have no other desire than to please You
alone.

3. FRUITS OF THE DEATH OF JESUS

St. John writes that our Savior, in order to make his disciples understand the death he was to suffer upon the cross, said, *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself. Now this he said, signifying what death he should die.*²

And, in fact, by exhibiting himself crucified and dead, how many souls has Jesus drawn to himself, so that they have left all to give themselves up entirely to his divine love. Ah, my Jesus! draw my soul to Yourself, which was one time lost; draw it by the chains of Your love, so that it may forget the world to think of nothing else but of loving and pleasing You. *Draw me after You by the odor of Your ointments.*³

My Lord, You know my weakness and the offences that I have committed against You. Draw me out of the mire of my passions; draw all my affections to Yourself, so that I may attend to nothing but Your pleasure only, O my God, most lovely! Hear me, O Lord! by the merits of Your death, and

make me wholly
Yours.

1 *Love of God*, Bk. 7. ch. 8.

2 "Et ego si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia traham ad
meipsum." John 12.32.

3 "Trahe me post te in odorem unguentorum
tuorum."

[345] St. Leo tells us that he who looks
with confidence
upon Jesus dead upon the cross is healed
of the wounds
caused by his sins. "They who with faith
behold the
death of Christ are healed from the
wounds of sin."¹

Every Christian, therefore, should keep
Jesus crucified
always before his eyes, and say with St.
Paul, *I judged not
myself to know anything among you, but
Jesus Christ,
and Him crucified.*² In short, the Apostle
says, that he
did not desire any other knowledge in
this world than
that of knowing how to love Jesus Christ
crucified. My
beloved Savior, to obtain for me a good
death You
have chosen a death so full of pain and
desolation!
I cast myself into the arms of Your
mercy. I see
that many years ago I ought to have been
in hell,
separated from You forever, for having at
one time de-
spised Your grace; but You have called
me to penance,

and I hope have pardoned me; but if
through my fault
You have not yet pardoned me, pardon
me at this
moment. I repent, O my Jesus! with my
heart, for
having turned my back upon You, and
driven You
from my soul. Restore me to Your grace.
But that is not
enough: give me strength to love You
with all my soul
during my whole life. And when I come
to the hour of
my death, let me expire burning with
love for You, and
saying, my Jesus, I love You, I love You,
and thus con-
tinue to love You for all eternity. From
this moment I
unite my death to Your holy death,
through which I hope
for my salvation. *In You, O Lord, have I
hoped; I shall
not be confounded forever.*³ O great
mother of God, you
after Jesus are my hope. In you, O Lady,
have I hoped;

1 "Qui intuentur fide mortem Christi, sanantur a
morsibus peccatorum."

In Jo. tr. 12.

2 "Non enim judicavi me scire aliquid inter vos, nisi
Jesum Christum,
et hunc crucifixum." 1 Cor. 2.2.

3 "In te, Domine, speravi; non confundar in
aeternum." Ps. 30.2.

[346] I shall not be confounded forever.
O devout souls,
when the devil wishes to make us
distrustful about our sal-

vation by the remembrance of our past sins, let us lift up our eyes to Jesus dead upon the cross, in order to deliver us from eternal death. After a God has made us know by means of the holy faith the desires he has of our salvation, having even sacrificed his life for us, if we are resolved really to love him for the remainder of our lives, cost what it may, we should be on our guard against any weakness of confidence in his mercy. After he has given us so many signs of his love for us, and of his desire for our salvation, it is a kind of sin against him not to put our whole confidence and hope in his goodness.

Full, then, of holy confidence, let us hope for every good from the hands of a God so liberal and so loving; and at the same time let us give ourselves to him without reserve, and thus pray to him: O eternal God, we are sinners, but You who are Almighty canst make us saints; grant that henceforth we may neglect nothing that we know to be for Your glory, and may do all to please You. Blessed shall we be if we lose all to gain

You, the infinite good. Grant that we
may spend the
remainder of our lives in pleasing You
alone. Punish
us as You will for our past sins, but
deliver us from
the chastisement of not being able to love
You; deprive
us of all things save Yourself. You have
loved us with-
out reserve; we also will love You
without reserve, O
infinite Love, O infinite Good. O Virgin
Mary, draw
us wholly to God; you can do so; do so
for the love
that you have for Jesus Christ.

4. CONCLUSION

Let us finish this little treatise with the
prayer of St.
Francis de Sales, saying: "O Eternal
Love, my soul
seeks You and chooses You for all
eternity. Come, O
[347] Holy Spirit! and kindle in our
hearts the fire of Your
love. To die and to love; to die to
everything, in order
to live eternally for the love of Jesus. O
Savior of our
souls, grant that we may sing forever and
ever, Live,
Jesus! I love Jesus. Live, Jesus, whom I
love! I love
Jesus, who lives and reigns forever and
ever. Amen!"¹

¹ *Love of God*, Bk. 12, ch. 13.

PART II. SERMON ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST*

1. First scene: The garden of Olives
2. Second scene: The Pretorium
3. Third scene: Calvary

ALAS, what melancholy signs strike me
in this tem-
ple! I see the dark appearance, I notice
the despoiled
altars; I hear the melancholy chant! Ah! I
understand:
these are signs of the grief that the
Church feels,
lamenting the death of Jesus her Spouse.
It is there-
fore just that on this day we unite our
tears to those of
the Church, who is our Mother, and that
we devote our-
selves to the consideration of the death of
our God, who
after a life of pain wished to die for us on
an infamous
gibbet, in an abyss of shame and
suffering.

Come, O holy cross! come and show
thyself to this
people; you are the fortunate Ark in
which one can find
salvation in the midst of the shipwreck of
this world;
you are the wonderful Rod that gives to
men the
strength to be able to become from

monsters of ini-
quity flourishing rods of holy virtues;
you are the
brazen Serpent at the sight of which
sinners, poisoned
by sin, may recover health; you are the
predestined
and resplendent Tree chosen among
thousands to sus-
tain the members of the Redeemer; and
you are, finally,
the sorrowful Altar on which the Savior
of the world
wished to be immolated for our salvation.
Give me the
strength and all the help that I need to
represent to
these faithful souls the ignominies, the
sufferings, and
the anguish which Jesus Christ endured
when upon
you he left this world.

The whole life of Jesus Christ was full of
sufferings
and ignominies; but there are especially
three sad scenes
of his pains in which he gave us the
greatest marks of

* It is not known at what time St. Alphonsus
composed this sermon;
we think it belongs to the first period of his
sacerdotal life. Nearly
all that it contains is found in Volume V. Ed.

[299] his love for us: the first is the
GARDEN OF OLIVES;
the second, the PRETORIUM; the third,
CALVARY.

The first of these scenes in which the Passion of our Redeemer began was hidden from the eyes of men, but not from the eyes of God and of the angels.

First Scene: The Garden of Olives

Having on Thursday evening washed the feet of his disciples after giving himself to us in the sacrament of the altar as a pledge of his tender love for us, our amiable Savior arrived at the garden about midnight, and prostrating himself on the ground, he began to pray. Then he was assailed by great fear, great repugnance, and great sadness.

He began then to feel great fear of the death and of the pains which he was to suffer: *He began to fear.*¹ But how? did he not offer himself voluntarily to undergo these torments? *He was offered because it was His own will.*² Did he not ardently desire this time of his Passion according to what he had said to his disciples a little while before: *With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you before I suffer.*³ How, after this, was he seized with so great a fear of death that

he went so far
as to ask his Father to be delivered from
it: *My Father,*
if it be possible, let this chalice pass from
*Me.*⁴ Ah!
certainly our good Lord wished to die for
us, and thus to
show us the love that he bore us; but in
order that the
men might understand what cruel
anguish and what
deluge of evils he was going to undergo
in his Passion,
he allowed so horrible a fear to come
over him: He
began to fear.

1 "Coepit pavere." Mark 14.33.

2 "Oblatus est, quia ipse voluit." Is. 53.7.

3 "Desiderio desideravi hoc pascha manducare
vobiscum, antequam
patiar." Luke 22.15.

4 "Pater mi, si possibile est, transeat a me calix iste."
Matt. 27.39.

[300] And to be heavy : He also began to
feel great repug-
nance at the sight of the pains that had
been prepared
for him. When one feels repugnance,
even delightful
things become painful. Hence with such
a repugnance
what punishment for the heart of Jesus,
what horrible
sight then presented itself to his mind of
all the inte-
rior and exterior torments which were to
deprive him of
life by afflicting so cruelly his body and
his blessed soul!

He distinctly saw all the sufferings that awaited him, the mockeries, the outrages, the injuries, the buffets, the thorns, the cross, and above all that ignominious and desolate death which he was to suffer on an infamous gibbet, abandoned by every one, by men and by God, in an abyss of sorrows and opprobrium. This is what caused him so bitter a repugnance that he was obliged to ask his eternal Father for strength: He began to fear and to be heavy.

With this fear and repugnance Jesus felt at the same time great sadness and great affliction of mind: *he began to grow sorrowful and to be sad.*¹ But, O Lord! is it not You that have given to Your martyrs such a force in sufferings that they went so far as to despise torments and death and to submit to them with joy? How then does it happen that for Yourself, O Jesus! You have reserved Yourself to suffer by dying in so great sadness? Ah! I know the reason ; for at this moment there were presented to his mind all the sins of the world, the blasphemies, the sacrileges, the impurities, and all the other sins

that men were going to commit after his death. Each one of these sins came then as a cruel monster to tear his heart by its own malice. It seems that then in his agony our afflicted Savior was obliged to say: O men! is it thus that you respond to the immense love that I have borne towards you? Alas! after so many sufferings endured for you, to see so many sins! after so many

1 "Coepit contristari et moestus esse." Matt. 26.37.

[301] proofs of my love, to see so much ingratitude! It is that which afflicts me, makes me sad even unto death, and makes me sweat blood: *And his sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground.*¹

O my tender Jesus! I do not notice in this garden scourges, thorns, nails, which wound You; yet I see You bathed in blood from head to foot. My sins therefore were the cruel pressure which, by the violence of the affliction and of sadness, forced so much blood from Your heart. I have myself been one of Your most cruel executioners.

But should we stop here in conversing with Jesus

when he is already hurrying to meet his
Passion which
he so much desires? In fact, there is
Judas, who is ac-
companied by a troop of Jews and
soldiers, and who is
coming to seize Jesus in the garden.
Jesus sees him
coming, and what does he do? Yet
bathed in blood,
with his heart all inflamed with love of
us, he rises, and
says to the three disciples who were with
him: *Rise up,
let us go. Behold, he that will betray me is
at hand.*²
Come let us meet the enemies who are
coming to arrest
me.

When Jesus was in their presence, Judas
advanced, ex-
tended his arms and gave him a kiss. This
kiss was the
sign of treason: on this account Jesus
addressed this
word of reproach to the traitor: *Judas,
betrayest you the
Son of man with a kiss?*³ O Judas! is it by
a kiss that
you betrayest the Son of man? He
afterwards asked
the Jews whom they were seeking:
*Whom do you seek?*⁴
They answered: Jesus of Nazareth. After
this they
brutally seized him, and bound him like a
criminal: *They*

¹ "Et factus est sudor ejus, sicut guttae sanguinis

decurrentis in terram."

Luke 22.44.

2 "Surgite, eamus: ecce, qui me tradet, prope est."

Mark 14.42.

3 "Juda, osculo Filium hominis tradis?" Luke 24.48.

4 "Quem quaeritis?" John 18.4.

[302] *took Jesus and bound him.*¹ Alas! a
God bound
like a criminal! "O King of kings!" cries
out St. Bernard,
weeping, "what have You to do with
chains?"² Chains
are for malefactors, and not for You who
are innocent,
the Saint of saints. "Look, O man!" says
St. Bonaven-
ture, "at these dogs dragging him
along."³

Jesus then bound, in the midst of this vile
soldiery, is
pushed out of the garden, and led to
Jerusalem before
the Prince of priests. And where are his
disciples? do
not at least they accompany their Master
in order to de-
fend him? No, all left him: *Then his
disciples, leaving
him, all fled away.*⁴

He then enters Jerusalem during the
night. At the
noise that so many people make in their
march, those
that are in the houses awaken and,
approaching the win-
dows, ask what prisoner they are leading
away. They
answer that it is Jesus of Nazareth, who

has been found
out to be an impostor, a seducer.

He is presented to Caiphas, who was
expecting him;
this proud high-priest is sitting, and Jesus
is standing
before him, having his hands tied like a
criminal, hold
ing his eyes cast down, all humility and
meekness. The
high-priest interrogates him on the
doctrine that he
taught; Jesus answered that he had
spoken publicly be
fore every one, and that the witnesses
present who had
heard him knew what he had said: *I have
spoken to the
world; . . . Behold, they know what things
I have said.*⁵
After an answer so just and so moderate,
an executioner
advances and gives him a severe blow on
the cheek, say-

1 "Comprehenderunt Jesum, et ligaverunt eum."
John 18.12.

2 "O Rex regum! quid tibi et vinculis?" *De Passione*,
ch. 4.

3 "Intuere, homo, canes istos trahentes eum." *De vita
Christi*, ch. 75.

4 "Tunc discipuli ejus relinquentes eum, omnes
fugerunt." Mark 14.50.

5 Ego palam locutus sum mundo; . . . ecce hi sciunt
quae dixerim ego."
John 18.20.

[303] ing in his fury: *Do you answer the
high-priest thus?*

How could an answer so humble merit so
gross an insult

in the presence of this assembly? The high-priest, however, instead of rebuking his insolent servant, remains silent, and by his silence approves of his conduct. But then Jesus said to the servant: *If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil; but if well, why do you strike me?*²

Then Caiphas commanded Jesus in the name of God to say whether he was the Son of God: *I adjure You, by the living God, that you tell us if You be the Christ the Son of God.*³ Our Lord then, asked in the name of God, confessed the truth, saying: *I am;*⁴ and one day you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the Father, and coming on the clouds of heaven to judge the world. At these words, Caiphas, instead of falling prostrate on his face to adore the Son of God, rends his garments and exclaims: *He has blasphemed!*⁵ Then addressing the other priests, he asked their counsel and said: Now you have heard the blasphemy. What think you? And all answered: *He is guilty of death.*⁶ Yes, my Jesus, You deserve death, since You have wished to make satisfaction for the sins of men.

Then the executioners seized him, and treating him as a man already condemned to death, they began to spit in his face and to buffet him: *Then did they spit in his face, and others struck his face with the palms of their hands.*⁷ Then having bandaged his eyes, and mocking him as

1 "Sic respondes Pontifici?" Ibid. 22.

2 "Si male locutus sum, testimonium perhibe de malo; si autem bene quid me caedis?" Ibid. 23.

3 Adjuro te per Deum vivum, ut dicas nobis, si tu es Christus Filius Dei." Matt. 26.63.

4 "Ego sum." 5 "Blasphemavit!" 6 "Reus est mortis!"

7 Tunc expuerunt in faciem ejus, et colaphis eum ceciderunt; alii autem palmas in faciem ejus dederunt." Matt. 26.67.

[304] a false prophet, they said: *Prophecy unto us, O Christ, who is he that struck You.*¹

When the morning was come, they conducted Jesus to Pilate in order to have him condemned to death. Pilate, finding no reason to condemn him, declared him innocent: *I find no fault in him.*² However, as the Jews insisted, he sent him to Herod to be judged by him. Herod was delighted to see Jesus in his court, because he hoped that our Lord would perform some miracles

about which he had heard others speak.
He then proposed many questions to him, but Jesus remained silent.
Then this proud tyrant ordered him to be clothed with a white garment as if he were a fool, and he sent him back to Pilate after having exposed him to the mockery and contempt of his entire court: *And Herod with his army, set Him at nought; and mocked Him, putting on Him a white garment, and sent Him back to Pilate.*³
O Son of God! O Eternal Wisdom! You wouldst submit even to the ignominy of being treated as a fool!

Pilate, in order to avoid condemning an innocent man, seeing that he was not successful in sending Jesus to Herod, devised another means. As the people had a right of asking the Roman governor for the liberation of a prisoner at the Paschal solemnity, Pilate proposed to them to choose between Jesus Christ and Barabbas, who was a wicked man, a homicide; but the people, instigated by the hatred of the priests, who wished the death of Jesus Christ, began to cry out that they preferred Barabbas: *Not this man, but*

Barabbas.⁴ This is
what he does that commits a mortal sin:
it is then pro-

1 "Prophetiza nobis, Christe, quis est, quite
percussit." Matt. 26.68.

2 "Ego nullam invenio in eo causam." Luke 23.4.

3 "Sprevit autem illum Herodes cum exercitu suo, et
illusit indutum

veste alba; et remisit ad Pilatum." Luke 23.11.

4 "Non hunc, sed Barabbam."

[305] posed to him to choose between
Jesus Christ and the
sin that he wishes to commit, as the sin
of revenge, of a
certain pleasure, etc.: when he gives his
consent, it is as
if he said: Not this man, but Barabbas; I
prefer Barabbas
to Jesus Christ.

After having proposed Jesus Christ and
Barabbas to
the choice of the people, and seeing that
this means was
unsuccessful, Pilate thought of having
him scourged
and then set at liberty: *I will chastise
Him, therefore, and
release Him*.¹ Here we are then at the
second scene of
the sufferings of Jesus Christ: *Then,
therefore, Pilate took
Jesus and scourged Him*.² O how much
less would he
have suffered if Pilate had had less
compassion for him,
and if he had without delay condemned
him to the
death of the cross! All this served but to
increase the

sufferings and humiliations of our Savior.

Second Scene: The Pretorium

Having arrived at the pretorium, our loving Jesus, obedient to the executioners, strips himself of his garments, embraces the column, and then lays on it his hands to have them bound. My God, already is begun the cruel torture! O angels of heaven! come and look on this sorrowful spectacle, and if it be not permitted you to deliver your king from this barbarous slaughter which men have prepared for him, at least come and weep for compassion. And ye, Christian souls, imagine yourselves to be present at this horrible tearing of the flesh of your beloved Redeemer; look on him how he stands, your afflicted Jesus with his head bowed, looking on the ground, blushing all over for shame, he awaits this great torture. Behold these barbarians, like so many ravenous dogs, are already with the scourges attacking this innocent Lamb. See how one

1 "Emendatum ergo illum dimittam." Luke 23.16.

2 "Tunc ergo apprehendit Pilatus Jesum, et flagellavit." John 19.1.

[306] beats him on the breast, another strikes his shoulders, another smites his loins and his legs; even his sacred head and beautiful countenance cannot escape the blows.

Ah me! already flows that divine blood from every part; already with that blood are saturated the scourges, the hands of the executioners, the column and the ground.

"He is wounded," mourns St. Laurence Justinian, "over his whole body, torn with the scourges; now they twine round his shoulders, now round his legs streak upon streaks, wounds added to fresh wounds."1

Ah, cruel men, with whom are you dealing thus? Stay stay; know that you are making a mistake. This man whom you are torturing is innocent and holy; it is we who are the culprits; to us, to us, who have sinned, are these stripes and torments due. O eternal Father! how canst You behold Your beloved Son suffering thus, and not interfere in his behalf? What is the crime that he has ever committed, to deserve so shameful and so severe a punishment? *For the wickedness of My people*

*have I struck Him.*² I well know, says the eternal Father, that this my Son is innocent; but inasmuch as he has offered himself as a satisfaction to my justice for all the sins of mankind, it is fitting that I should abandon him to the rage of his most cruel enemies.

Ye barbarians, are you not yet satisfied? No; they are not yet satisfied. After having thus scourged him, these executioners wish to treat him as a mock king. What do they do? They make him sit upon a stone, put upon his shoulders a scarlet cloak in imitation of the purple, and into his hand a reed for a sceptre, and upon his head for a crown a bundle of thorns which covers it entirely from the forehead to the neck; and in

¹ "Caeditur, totoque flagris corpore dissipatur ; nunc scapulas, nunc crura cingunt ; vulnera vulneribus et plagas plagis recentibus addunt."

De Tr. Chr. Ag., ch. 2.

² "Propter scelus populi mei percussi eum." Matt. 27.30.

[307] order that the thorns might sufficiently enter the head, they took a reed and beat with all their might the cruel crown into the head of Jesus: *They took the reed and struck His head.*¹

It is not yet enough: bending the knee
before him,
they mocked him, saying: We salute you,
O king of
the Jews! Then rising, they laugh at him,
mock him,
and buffet him: *And bowing the knee
before Him, they
derided Him, saying, Hail King of the
Jews;2 and they
struck Him.3*

Approach, devout souls, and
acknowledge him as your
Savior, while his enemies are maltreating
and mocking
him. Yes, he is a king; but at this moment
he is the
king of sorrows: he is, however, a king of
love, since
for the love of you he suffers all these
pains.

After having thus scourged him and
crowned him
with thorns, they seized him as he was,
all covered with
wounds and blood, and led him to Pilate.
The latter,
seeing him reduced to a state so worthy
of compassion,
thought it would be sufficient, in order to
pacify the
Jews, to show them such as he was. He
therefore led
him forth before them, and exhibiting
him to the people,
said to them: Behold the man. *Pilate
went forth again*

*to them, . . . and said to them, Behold the man;*⁴ as though he would have said: Behold the man whom you feared wished to make himself your king; see him reduced to such a state that he cannot live any longer. Let him go and die in his own house; he has but a short time to live; see him reduced to such a state that he has scarcely the appearance of a man. Permit him,

1 "Acceperunt arundinem, et percutiebant caput ejus." Matt. 27.30.

2 "Et genu flexo ante eum, illudebant ei, dicentes : Ave Rex Judaeorum!" Matt. 27.29.

3 "Et dabant ei alapas." John 19.3.

4 "Exivit ergo iterum Pilatus foras, . . . et dicit eis : Ecce Homo."

[308] therefore, to be set at liberty, your anger against him being sufficiently appeased. If, notwithstanding, you ask that I should condemn him to death, I declare to you that I cannot do so, because I find no reason to condemn him: *I find no fault in Him.*¹

As Pilate from the balcony showed Jesus to the people, so at the time the same eternal Father from heaven showed us his well-beloved Son, by saying, Behold the man: Behold this man, who is my only begotten Son,

whom I love with the same love with
which I love my-
self! *This is My beloved Son, in Whom I
am well pleased.*²
Behold the Man, your Savior, him whom
I have prom-
ised, and for whom you were anxiously
waiting. He
has become a man of sorrows. Behold
him, and see to
what a pitiable condition he has reduced
himself through
the love that he has borne towards you.
Oh, look at
him, and love him! and if his divine
qualities move you
not, at least let these sorrows and
ignominies which he
suffers for you move you to love him.

But did the words of Pilate satisfy the
cruelty of the
enemies of Jesus Christ? On the contrary,
the chief
priests raised their voices, and cried out:
*Away with
Him! away with Him! crucify Him!*³
Pilate, however,
still resisted, and refused to condemn
Jesus. Then they
threatened to accuse him as an enemy of
Caesar if he re-
fused to pronounce sentence: *If you let
this Man go,
you are no friend of Caesar's.*⁴ They thus
succeeded in
obtaining the desired condemnation; but
before pro-
nouncing it, Pilate washed his hands,
declaring himself

innocent of the death of this just man: *I am innocent of*

1 "Ego enim non invenio in eo causam." John 19.6.

2 "Hic est Filius meus dilectus, in quo mihi bene complacui." Matt. 17.5.

3 "Tolle, tolle ; crucifige eum." John 19.6.

4 "Si hunc dimittis, non es amicus Caesaris." Ibid. 12.

[309] *the blood of this just Man; see to it yourselves.*¹

O injustice unheard of in this world: the judge declares the accused to be innocent, and at the same time he condemns him to death!

Unhappy Jews, you then said: *His blood be upon us, and upon our children.*² You have prayed for the chastisement; it has already come; your children bear to the end of the world the punishment due to the shedding of that innocent blood.

The unjust sentence is read: Jesus accepts it in expiation of our sins: *He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*³

After the publication of the sentence Jesus is again clothed in his garments that he might be recognized, disfigured as he is by such bad treatment. The cross is

presented to him; Jesus embraces it, it is placed upon his shoulders, and he begins to walk towards Calvary:

And bearing His own cross, He went forth to that place

*which is called Calvary.*⁴ The condemned criminals now

come forth from Pilate's residence, and in the midst of

them there goes also our condemned

Lord, carrying him

self the wood upon which he is to die. O

heavens! this

Messias, who a few days before, on Palm

Sunday, was

received with the acclamations and

benedictions of the

people: *Blessed is He who comes in the*

name of the

*Lord!*⁵ See him now in the same streets,

bound, execrated

by all, moving along to die the death of a

criminal. What

a spectacle to see a God led to execution!

The appearance

1 "Innocens ego sum a sanguine justi hujus ; vos videritis." Matt. 27.24.

2 "Sanguis ejus super nos et super filios nostros."

3 "Humiliavit semetipsum, factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis." John 19.15.

4 "Et bajulans sibi crucem, exivit in eum, qui dicitur Calvarias, locum." Matt. 21.9.

5 "Benedictus, qui venit in nomine Domini!" John 19.17.

[310] of Jesus in this journey was so

pitiable that it made

all those shed tears that saw him: *And*

there followed Him

*a great multitude of people, and of women who bewailed and lamented Him.*¹ Ah! look at him also, you who love Jesus Christ; see his torn flesh, his dripping blood, the crown of thorns upon his head, the heavy cross upon his shoulders; and while one of the executioners drags him violently along by a rope, see how painful is his walk, see his body bent double, his trembling knees, so that it seems as if he would expire at every step.

O divine Lamb! have You not yet Your fill of sufferings? How dear did it cost You to make me comprehend the love which You have for me! Oh, grant me those aids to love You which You have merited for me by so many sufferings! Bestow upon me that sacred fire which You didst come to enkindle upon earth by dying for us. Be ever reminding me of Your death that I may never forget to love You.

Isaiah predicted that our Lord would carry the cross upon his shoulders as a mark of his reign: *Upon His shoulder dominion rests.*² The cross, says Tertullian, was precisely the noble instrument

whereby Jesus Christ
made acquisition of so many souls; since
by dying
thereon he paid the penalty due to our
sins, and thus
rescued us from hell, and made us his
own: *Who Him-
self bore our sins in His body upon the
cross.*³

Thus, O my Jesus! if the eternal Father
burdened
You with all the sins of men, *The Lord
laid upon Him
the iniquities of us all.*⁴ I with my own
sins added to the
weight of the cross that You did bear to
Calvary.

1 "Sequebatur autem illum multa turba populi et
mulierum, quae plangebant
et lamentabantur eum." Luke 23.27.

2 "Factus est principatus super humerum ejus." Is.
9.6.

3 Qui peccata nostra ipse pertulit in corpore suo
super lignum." 1 Pet. 2.24.

4 "Posuit Dominus in eo iniquitatem omnium
nostrum." Is. 53.6.

[311] My sweetest Savior, You did even
then foresee
all the wrongs that I should do to You;
yet, notwith-
standing, You did not cease to love me,
or to prepare
for me all the merits that You have since
employed
towards me. If then to You I have been
dear, most vile
and ungrateful sinner as I am, who have
so much
offended You, good reason is there why

You should
be dear to me. Ah, would that I had never
displeased
You! Now, my Jesus, do I know the
wrong that I
have done You. O you accursed sins of
mine, what have
you done? You have caused me to
sadden the loving
heart of my Redeemer, that heart which
has loved me
so much. O my Jesus! forgive me,
repenting, as I do,
of having done evil to You. Henceforth it
is You who
are to be the only object of my love. I
love You, O
infinite loveliness, with all my heart; and
I resolve to
love none else but You. O Lord! pardon
me; I say
to You with St. Ignatius: "Give me Your
love only
together with Your grace, and I am rich
enough." 1

Third Scene: Calvary

Here we are at the third and last scene of
the tor-
tures that of Calvary, which brought
death to Jesus
Christ. They immediately tear off his
garments, stick-
ing to his wounded flesh, and throw him
down upon
the cross. The divine Lamb reaches forth
to the execu-
tioners his hands and his feet to be
nailed, and offers

up to his eternal Father the great sacrifice
of his life
for the salvation of men. After the nailing
of one of
his hands, the nerves shrink so that they
had need of
main force and ropes to draw the other
hand and feet
up to the places where they were to be
nailed; and this
occasioned so great a tension of the
nerves and veins,
that they broke asunder with a violent
convulsion, as

1 "Amorem tui solum cum gratia tua mihi dones, et
dives sum satis."

[312] was revealed to St. Bridget: "They
drew my hands
and feet with a rope to the places of the
nails, so that
the nerves and veins were stretched out
to the full and
broke asunder;"¹ insomuch that all his
bones might
have been numbered, as David had
already predicted:

*They pierced My hands and My feet, they
numbered
all My bones.*²

St. Augustine says that there is no death
more bitter
than that of the cross. "Among all the
different kinds
of death, there was none worse."³;
Because, as St.
Thomas⁴ observes, those who are
crucified have their

hands and their feet pierced through,
parts which being
entirely composed of nerves, muscles,
and veins, are the
most sensitive to pain, and the very
weight of the body
itself, which is suspended from them,
causes the pain to
be continuous and ever increasing in its
intensity up to
the moment of death.

But the pains of Jesus were far beyond
all other
pains; for, as the Angelic Doctor says,
the body of Jesus
Christ, being perfectly constituted, was
more quick and
sensitive to pain than that body which was
fashioned for
him by the Holy Spirit, expressly with a
view to his suf-
fering, as he had foretold, as the Apostle
testifies: *A body
You have prepared for Me.*" Moreover,
St. Thomas says
that Jesus Christ took upon himself an
amount of suffering
so great as to be sufficient to satisfy for
the temporal
punishment merited by the sins of all
mankind.

My soul, behold your Lord, behold your
life hanging upon
that tree: *And your life shall be, as it
were, hanging*

1 "Manus et pedes cum tunc trahebant ad loca
clavorum, ita ut

nervi et venae extenderentur et rumperentur." *Rev.* 1, ch. 10.

2 "Foderunt manus meas et pedes meos, dinumeraverunt omnia ossa mea." Ps. 21.17.

3 "Pejus nihil fuit inter omnia genera mortium." *In Jo.*, tr. 36.

4 *S.T.* III. q. 46. a. 6.

5 "Corpus autem aptasti mihi." Heb. 10.5.

[313] *before you.* 1 Behold how on that cross of pain, fastened by those cruel nails, he finds no place of rest. Now he leans his weight upon his hands, now upon his feet; but on what part soever he leans, the anguish increases. He turns his afflicted head now on one side, now on the other; if he lets it fall towards his breast, the hands, by the additional weight, are rent the more; if he lowers it towards his shoulders, the shoulders are pierced with thorns; if he leans it back upon the cross, the thorns enter the more deeply into his head.

Ah, my Jesus, what a death of bitterness is this that You are enduring! O my crucified Redeemer, I adore You on this throne of disgrace and pain. Upon this cross I read it written that You are a King: *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.* 2 But apart from this title of scorn, what is the evidence that You give of being

a king? Ah, these hands transfixed with
nails, this head
pierced with thorns, this throne of
sorrow, this lacerated
flesh, make me well know that You are a
king, but a
king of love. With humility, then, and
tenderness do I
draw near to kiss Your sacred feet,
transfixed for love of
me. I clasp in my arms this cross, on
which You, being
made a victim of love, were willing to
offer Yourself in
sacrifice for me to the divine justice:
being made obe-
*dient unto death, the death of the cross.*³
O blessed
obedience, that obtained for us the
pardon of our sins!
And what would have become of me, O
my Savior,
had You not paid the penalty for me?

Contemplating one day the love of Jesus
in dying
for us, St. Francis of Paula, rapt in
ecstasy and raised
in the air, exclaimed three times in a loud
voice: "O
God, love! O God, love! O God, love!"
You

1 "Et erit vita tua quasi pendens ante te." Deut.
28.66.

2 "Jesu Nazareus, Rex Judaeorum." John 19.19.

3 "Factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem
crucis." Phil. 2.8.

[314] also, devout souls, look on your
divine Savior on

this painful cross; see how he remains
fastened by those
three nails, so that the pierced hands and
feet had to
sustain the weight of the entire body; on
whichever side
he wishes to rest his pains are increased.
Alas! our af-
flicted Savior finds no place of rest.

Behold the King of heaven, who,
hanging on that gib-
bet, is now on the point of giving up the
ghost. Let us,
too, ask of him with the prophet: *What
are those wounds
in the middle of Your hands?* Tell me, O
my Jesus, what
are these wounds in the middle of Your
hands?1 The
Abbot Rupert makes answer for Jesus:
"They are the
memorials of love, the price of
redemption."2 They
are tokens, says the Redeemer, of the
great love which
I bear toward you; they are the payment
by which I set
you free from the hands of your enemies,
and from eter-
nal death.

Do you, then, O faithful souls, love your
God, who has
had such love for you; and if you do at
any time feel
doubtful of his love, turn your eyes, says
St. Thomas of
Villanova, to behold that cross, those
pains, and that

bitter death which he has suffered for
you; for such
proofs will assuredly make you know
how much your
Savior loves you: "The cross testifies, the
pains testify,
the bitter death that he had endured for
you testifies
this."³ And St. Bernard adds that the
cross cries out,
every wound of Jesus cries out, that he
loves us with a
true love: "The cross proclaims, the
wounds proclaim,
that he truly loves."⁴

While hanging on the cross Jesus looked
in vain for some-
one to console him: *I looked for one that
would grieve*

1 "Quid sunt plagae istae in medio manuum
tuarum?"

2 "Sunt monumenta charitatis, pretia redemptionis."

3 "Testis crux, testes dolores, testis amara mors,
quam pro te sustinuit."

Dom. 17. p. Pent. conc. 3.

4 "Clamat crux, clamat vulnus, quod ipse vere
dilexit."

[315] *together with me, but there was
none.*¹ On the

contrary, he heard those around him
uttering blasphemies:

*If you are the Son of God, come down
from the cross.*²

*You who will destroy the temple of God,
and in three days*

*rebuild it, save yourself.*³ *He saved
others, himself he can-*

*not save.*⁴ Why should they care to afflict
by insults and

derision one that is already expiring on the cross?

And Jesus, while these are outraging him, what is he doing upon the cross? Is he perhaps praying to the eternal Father to punish them? No, he is praying to him to pardon them: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*⁵ Yes, says St. Thomas; to show forth the immense love which he had for men, the Redeemer asked pardon of God for his crucifiers: "To show forth the abundance of his love, he asked pardon for his persecutors."⁶ He asked it, and obtained it; for, when they had seen him die they repented of their sin: *They returned beating their breasts.*⁷

Ah, my dear Savior, behold me at Your feet; I have been one of the most ungrateful of Your persecutors; pray likewise for me to Your Father to pardon me. True it is that the Jews and the executioners knew not what they were doing when they crucified You; but I well knew that in sinning I was offending a God who had been crucified, and had died for me. But Your blood and Your death have

merited even for

1 "Et sustinui . . . qui consolaretur, et non inveni."
Ps. 68.21.

2 "Si Filius Dei es, descende de cruce."

3 "Vale, qui destruis templum Dei, et in triduo
reaedificas; salva teipsum."

4 "Alios salvos fecit, seipsum non potest salvum
facere." Matt. 27.40-42.

5 "Pater! dimitte illis; non enim sciunt quid faciunt."
Luke 23.34.

6 "Ad ostendendam charitatis suae, veniam pro
persecutoribus postulavit."
S.T. III. q. 47. a. 4.

7 "Percutientes pectora sua, revertebantur." Luke
23.48.

[316] me the divine mercy. I cannot feel
doubtful of being
pardoned after seeing You die to obtain
pardon for me.

The sorrowful Mother stood at the foot of
the cross

with some pious women: *There stood by
the cross of Jesus*

His mother. 1 O God! who would not pity
a mother

standing beside the cross on which a son
dies before

her eyes? Consider Mary, standing
beneath the cross,

contemplating the pains in the midst of
which her well-

beloved Son was expiring: She desired to
give him

some alleviation, and she saw, on the
other hand, that

her presence increased the grief of this
same Son, who

was full of compassion for his tender
Mother. This

was a terrible affliction for Mary, a

torture that made
her the Queen of Martyrs.

Seeing himself, then, abandoned by
every one, all
men trying to make his death more
painful, Jesus raised
his eyes to his eternal Father to obtain
some consola-
tion. But seeing him laden with all our
sins, for which
he wished to satisfy the divine justice, his
Father also
abandoned him. Then it was that our
Savior, crying
out with a loud voice, said: *My God, My
God, why have
You forsaken Me?*²

But our Savior, so full of love, is on the
point of
expiring. Christians, look at the cross.
Behold those
dying eyes, that face so pale, the sacred
body which
is abandoned to death. Before expiring,
Jesus uttered
these words: *It is finished.*³ It is as if he
had said:
O men, love me; I have done all that I
can do in order
to save your souls and gain your love.
See the painful
life that I have led during thirty-three
years for love of
you. I wished then on your account to be
scourged, to

¹ "Stabant autem juxta crucem Jesu Mater ejus. . . ."
John 19.25.

2 "Deus meus! Deus meus! ut quid dereliquisti me?"
Matt.. 27.46.

3 "Consummatum est." John 19.30.

[317] be crowned with thorns, to be
struck, to be covered
with wounds from head to foot. What
more was needed?
Should I die for love of you? Well, then!
I wish to die. Come,
O death! I permit you to come; take away
my life, in order
that my sheep may live. *And Jesus,*
crying with a loud
voice, said, Father, into Your hands I
commend My
spirit. 1 My Father, he then said, I die for
Your glory
and for the salvation of men; I commend
my soul into
Your hands. Behold, then, Jesus dies. O
angels of
heaven, come, come to be present at the
death of your
God. And you, O sorrowful Mother!
approach nearer
to the cross; look at him more
steadfastly, for he is
about to expire.

And you Christians, behold him in his
agony; see him
amid the last respirations of life. Behold
his dying
eyes, that face so pale, that feebly
palpitating heart,
that body already wrapped in the arms of
death, and
that beautiful soul now on the point of
leaving that
wounded body.

The sky shrouds itself in darkness; the earth quakes; the graves open. Alas, what portentous signs are these! They are signs that the Maker of the world is now dying.

Behold, in the last place, how our Lord, after having commended his blessed soul to his eternal Father, first breathing forth from his afflicted heart a deep sigh, and then bowing down his head in token of his obedience, and offering up his death for the salvation of men, at last through the violence of the pain expires, and delivers up his spirit into the hands of his beloved Father:

*And crying out with a loud voice, He said
Father into
Your hands I commend My spirit;¹ and
saying this He
gave up his spirit.²*

1 "Et clamans voce magna, Jesus ait : Pater! in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum." Luke 23.46.

2 "Et haec dicens, exspiravit." Ibid.

[318] All those that were present looking at him with attention see him expire, and observing that he is motionless, they exclaim, 'He is dead he is dead!' Mary hears this from all the bystanders, and she also

says, 'Ah, my
Son, You are dead!' He is dead! Ah, who
is dead?
It is the King of heaven; the Creator of
the world, a
God, who wished to die for us poor
sinners.

Act of Contrition while showing the Crucifix

Come sinners; here is Jesus Christ who
has stretched
forth his arms to embrace you. Can you
fear that he
will not pardon you, when he gave
himself up to death
in order to pardon you?

Do you perhaps fear that you will not
obtain pardon
because you find yourselves unable to
perform the pen-
ance that your sins deserve? Console
yourselves; for
you here see the penance that Jesus
Christ has himself
performed for you on the cross; it is
sufficient if you
sincerely repent of having offended him.

Look at him; see where you can find any
one that has
loved you more than Jesus Christ has
loved you. Love
him then, since he died in order to be
loved by you.
Say to him: Ah, my sweet Savior! whom
should I love
if I do not love a God who has died for

me?

O sorrowful Mother! through the sorrow
that you
did experience in seeing your divine Son
expire, obtain
for me holy perseverance and a true love
of my divine
Redeemer.

Prayer

My Jesus, by the pain You did endure
when Your
left hand was pierced with the nail, give
me a true
sorrow for my sins.

My Jesus, by the pain You did endure
when Your
right hand was pierced with the nail, give
me perseverance
in Your grace.

My Jesus, by the pain You did endure
when Your
left foot was pierced with the nail, deliver
me from the
pains of hell.

My Jesus, by the pain You did endure
when Your
right foot was pierced with the nail, give
me the grace
to love You eternally in heaven.

My Jesus, by the wound that was made in
Your Sacred
Heart, give me the grace to love You
always in this life
and in the next.

Have mercy on us, Jesus, our Love.
Pray for us, Mary, our Hope.

