

## Meditation on Our Lord's Passion

9<sup>th</sup> March 1873

My dear daughters,

Among many possible practices for Lent, one of the most useful, I think, is to meditate on Our Lord's Passion. All the saints and all the masters of the spiritual life insist on this, especially St. Thomas Aquinas. I have not seen it in his writings, but Dominicans and holy priests have told me that he considers meditation on the Passion as the sure way to perfection, the subject we must always come back to, and that must predominate in Christian souls and especially in those who tend to perfection.

Truly, Our Lord is the Way we must walk in. the Way of Salvation. And when we appear before God our judge, what will get us into heaven is our likeness to our divine model.

This likeness has very different features in each soul, for instance in a woman of the world, in a working woman, in the mother of a family, in a nun. But in every soul that is saved, Our Lord must recognise conformity with his Gospel, conformity with his life, with his Cross. We are told that at the last day, a shining Cross will appear in the sky, when glory is given to those who have suffered for Our lord.

The Gospels, the Epistles, the writings of the Fathers are full of this teaching. Doesn't St. Paul say: "*Those who from the first were known to Him He has destined... to be*

*moulded into the image of His Son.*<sup>1</sup> Most certainly there are crosses in this world, more perhaps, than in the Religious Life. Don't we hear everyday of people losing their money, of deaths, of sorrows of the heart, of disasters, of revolutions? It is quite certain that crosses are not lacking.

Why then, among so many trials, great and small, when so many things go wrong, among the sorrows and sufferings of every day, why do so few people become conformed to the sign of salvation, the Cross of Jesus Christ? What they lack is meditation on the Passion. Few people seem to have the dispositions of Our Lord towards suffering. We can never ask sufficiently for these dispositions, nor strive sufficiently to acquire them.

How is it, Sisters, that in the Tyrolean mountains poor people who hardly know how to read but who do know their catechism attain a high degree of contemplation? Their life is spent in carving little crucifixes. Their carving is rough, but while they work they ponder on the sorrowful mysteries of the Passion; they meditate all the time on Our Lord's sufferings, following the clock of the Passion.

This is quite an elementary devotion, and one that can be recommended to everyone, especially to people who are busy with material things and who need something to come back to from time to time to renew their recollection. While they are working their mind is free and so they can think of our Lord and his mysteries. We can do this at Office, at meditation, everywhere. There is no moment when we

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. 8: 29

cannot picture what Our Lord did or suffered for us at that very time, and adore the holy dispositions of his soul; expiation for sin, continuous reparation, ardent love, universal generosity, the martyr spirit, the spirit of self-sacrifice, the disposition to give himself as a holocaust, such patience, such gentleness and all the heroic virtues of which He gave us an example.

If every day we meditated on the Passion in this way we would realise that the great business of life for us is to grow like Our Lord so as to be more closely united to Him. We should learn to see what makes us suffer as a gift from God. Suffering should never separate us from Our Lord or trouble us when we meet it. We would accept suffering as a means of being united to Our Lord, as leading us to eternal salvation. And not just a means, but the strongest means of all. Suffering leads us to everlasting glory. It is the way to heaven. Our first business is to know how to follow Our Lord, and by meditating on his Passion to attain his love.

Indeed there is no stronger motive for ardent love for Our Lord than the thought of the love He showed us by dying for us on the Cross, when He was so ill-treated, hatefully abused, amid the most painful and cruel circumstances, with anguish of soul and body, and the indifference of his friends. The very apostles themselves had fled. In bearing all this He gave us the supreme proof of his love, as He himself has said: *“This is the greatest love a man can show, that he lay down his life for his friends.”*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Jn. 15: 13

Certainly to give one's belongings, one's wealth, one's affection is a proof of love. But nothing can be compared to the gift of one's life and Our Lord made this gift in his Passion in the most painful circumstances, the most cruel sufferings. And He bore it all without complaint. He even loved his pain. The martyrs have imitated Our Lord in this suffering part of his life. They really followed Him to Calvary and shed their blood for Him, but He alone welcomed all suffering with a fullness of love that no-one could ever equal.

You will tell me, perhaps, that Our Lord's suffering only lasted for twenty four hours. But if you think you will see that they lasted much longer than that. His human nature was of such delicate perfection. It was the masterpiece of the Holy Spirit and his soul was so full of light. All his life long Calvary was before his eyes. His sufferings, his anguish, seen so long beforehand, longed for so ardently, are to be multiplied by the value of centuries and need centuries to be imitated. They compensate for all that we leave undone, they sanctify the little we do, and they make our life fully Christian.

So during Lent Our Lord's Passion must occupy us. If, as St. Teresa says, one loving look at the Crucifix never goes without its reward, how much more, believe me, will this constant meditation on the Passion, attaching us to every step of Our Lord, make us gather up the smallest drops of his blood, share the anguish of his soul and all his feelings. By this means our resolutions will fall in with them and we shall be led little by little to more intimate union with Him, so that He will love us and so that we shall love none but Him.

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