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The sufferings of the Passion

Saint Marie Eugénie de Jésus

Dear Sisters,

I want to say only a few words to remind you that the thought that must dominate all others at this moment and fill all the occupation of your soul is that of our crucified Lord. You must get used to looking at him in his extreme sufferings. I think that in your meditations during this Lent, you have studied the extent of his sufferings, you have better understood what they must have been for the heart of the Blessed Virgin, it is absolutely frightening. She saw our Lord hanging on the cross with wounds, crowned with thorns and unable to rest his head on either side, nailed to the cross by the cruelty of men who had fixed him to that wood to die there.

We sometimes have sufferings: they are small things, but we regard them as very great. We must get used to bearing them at the foot of the Cross, and there all things change. It is for us, to redeem us, to give us baptism and the other sacraments that our Lord had to and wanted to go through such cruel sufferings. He was willing to accept death and the death of the cross. It was His Father's plan, but He was obedient to it. What then should we do with our physical or moral sufferings?

He was betrayed by one of his disciples, denied by another, abandoned by all, he suffered the cruelty of people, their derision. Jesus suffered all forms of contempt. He was played with as the cruel beast plays with the prey it has been able to seize. Thus the cruelty of men played with our Lord and made him an object of mockery, a cruel and abominable joke, for the crown of thorns itself was like a joke from the soldiers to whom he had been delivered and who could do with him whatever they wished. He was handed over to the will, to the cruelty of people, to all the basest feelings that can come together in the human soul.

This is what our Lord did for us; and if we are to be worthy of this time of Passion, we must have it before our eyes and also have some of the feelings that were in the heart of the Blessed Virgin, those feelings that were so tender, so ardent, so devoted, so generous, that made the Blessed Virgin suffer at the foot of the Cross more than any martyr. She could not say that she did not want to, she was there as the priest of this great sacrifice, she offered it to God in love, adoration, perfect submission to all his designs.

Let us come back to ourselves. What do we accept in the same way? When God sends us a pain, a suffering, do we know how to enter into God's will and make this sacrifice, this immolation? Unfortunately, love of ourselves is still very much alive in us, and it is very difficult to get rid of it completely so that the love of our Lord can prevail. The Blessed Virgin only felt the love she had for our Lord; she only felt his sacrifice, which was so painful, and the immense love which

made him immolate himself. She would have liked to take into her poor, already broken, body all that afflicted our Lord in body and soul.

Many saints have been in similar dispositions. I am not telling you this for the sufferings that you will seek, that you will imagine, but for all those that God will send you. Finally, there will be a day which will be the last of all our days. How then we shall need patience when we are at death, when we are in agony, not like our Lord on a very hard cross, nailed to that wood and supporting himself only by the wounds that pierced his feet and hands. It will not be so for us, but we will finally arrive at that painful moment of agony when we must give ourselves entirely to God, submitting to everything. We must prepare ourselves now for that day, which will be the last, and prepare ourselves for it by submission, by abasement, by living faith, by the love of Jesus Christ crucified.

I have assisted many souls at this last moment and I have always seen that the greatest support for those who go to God is the Crucifix. Let it be yours, Sisters, because you will have acquired the habit of revering it, of loving it, of placing yourselves in the hands of our crucified Lord, of doing everything in union with the feelings he had on the cross.

Bossuet says about this word: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? that the abandonment that our Lord suffered on the cross was the cruelest thing in the world. He was no longer the only Son, the object of all the Father's delight and pleasure. God saw in Him only the universal sinner, the one who had substituted Himself for the guilty human being and who bore the curse due to sin. There are few who go through such anguish. In general, with us, God softens the death of the nuns, He makes Himself felt in the soul, He sustains it, He carries it with Him and brings it through the anguish of agony. But for our Lord it was not so. What agony of the soul with that of the body during the three hours that he remained on the cross!

If our Lord died earlier than expected, it was because the cruel scourging, the crowning with thorns, the carrying of the cross had exhausted His strength, and then He died of starvation and when He went up to Calvary He was already in a state of collapse. How difficult it is, when all strength fails us, to say to God: "My God, yes, whatever you want, as you want it, because you want it." It takes a lot of courage. Yet this is what our Lord expects of us in exchange for his sacrifice, that and love.