

## Lent

Paris, Sunday, February 22, 1863

**One who aspires to union with God will use mortification as the mystical ladder of Jacob** (cf. Gn. 28:12). This is the sign of true progress in the journey towards God. It can even be said that one can go to God only through the cross of Calvary. It is the *sharp, two-edged sword* (cf. Rev 1:16) mentioned in the Book of Revelations. The journey to life passes through death. To know the state of a soul, this is what must be examined. If its detachment is great, this soul is great; if not, then it is still plodding on the ground and in the mud. Why is mortification the measure of our progress towards God? Because we must set ourselves aside to be united with God.

**Mortification spiritualizes our body.** The body remains essentially the same, but its tendency to slavery is imprisoned by the grace and love of God. One might say that mortification makes the body transparent. Notice how the body of a pure person seems transparent with purity. It seems to radiate with holiness, in such a way that pure souls become attractive. Even sinners and those with no religion are touched in spite of themselves by the sight of a child or a pure virgin. There is something that attracts them. One is always drawn to what is most perfect.

This does not mean that mortification creates skeletons. You must not think the saints are all emaciated. Some are rather stout; otherwise I would not dare speak. According to a legend, St. Basil was only skin and bones, to the point of being transparent. When I say that the body is spiritualized, I do not say that it is made smaller. Rather, like a crystal exposed to the light, it becomes brilliant and shining. When the virtue of our Lord is in the soul as in the body, there is a kind of light where everything appears calm, like God reigning in the soul. St. Paul says: *I drive my body and train it* (1 Cor. 9:27). He does not add the conclusion: *in order to lift it towards God*. The body and the senses are all linked together; the goal of mortification is to bind and control them with the power of virtue, and keep them in their proper place. Sometimes the soul is like a crystal sea without waves or ripples. How easily does the ship travel calmly and quietly towards eternity!

[...]

**Mortification spiritualizes the body by making it docile to the grace of God. It also clears the mind.** The body can be tamed, even if it sometimes hesitates, acting like an alcoholic passing a liquor store. Its base instincts need the chains of mortification to tie it down and keep it still. But the hardest mortification is that of the mind.

Usually, our mind is occupied with two things at once, never quiet. Focusing on one idea, it seeks for another. Since the mind is the seat of pride and self-love, mortification aims at removing from it all that is not from God, setting it free. We can say that mortification tries to free the mind from what is not its true self. Our mind was made to know, love, and serve God. When our mind is preoccupied with material things, the Spirit of God within us reminds us that this is not right. We are always mixing self-love with love of God. We are always feverish. When the mind forgets God, it experiences constant confusion and feverishness. The discipline of the Holy Spirit is needed to control it like an unruly child. As the mind is simplified through mortification, it can better follow its thoughts, since it can now focus on the interior life. An unmortified person, however, cannot do this. There may be some success, but the mind soon escapes, like a child that stops briefly when called, and then quickly runs away.

Our poor mind is so fickle that it cannot be controlled. Our body is different; it can be disciplined, but the mind is like the wind, difficult to grasp. God was wise not to say: Give me your mind. Why? Because it is touring the world. In the book of Job, Satan presents himself before God who asks him: *Where have you been? – I have been roaming the earth*. He seemed to claim: I am its master. Annoyed, God said: *Have you noticed my servant Job?* (cf. Jb 1:7-8) Our mind is like that. If God asked where it has been, it has been roaming the earth.

**Our goal, then, is to mortify ourselves through the mind (spirit) of our Lord.** Some want to mortify themselves through reason, but the mind will not listen to the voice of authority. Others try to mortify themselves through debate, attempting to corner the mind in a box; but it gets away. On the other hand, the grace of our Lord does not imprison the mind, but gives it a good and excellent object; namely, our Lord himself, the rest is nothing. When we want to recollect ourselves for prayer, to take a resolution, we soon begin roaming the world. That's not the right approach, a sick person cannot cure himself. Mortify your mind by turning to our Lord.

Mortification, however, goes further. Its goal is to set us free. The body holds on to sensuality and rest; the mind is fickle and flighty, interested in transient things. Besides, the Good Lord did not want to remain in the body nor in the mind which are so imperfect, that's not what He seeks. When one buys a house, one buys everything, even the unimportant trifles. When the heart is given, everything is given.

**The ultimate goal of mortification is detachment of heart. What kind of detachment?** Detachment from everything, because the nature of a heart is to be a slave, worried and fearful, unable to live on its own, its power is in its affection. When blood passes through the valves of the heart, incoming air would be deadly. The life of the heart is to pulse, or to beat if you prefer, since the heart gives itself totally, holding back nothing. If it has no affections, it looks for a new one, since it is naturally poor.

Mortification liberates us from the slavery of the heart, from its disordered attractions to all kinds of things. Any attachment is disordered if it occurs imperfectly in a way rejected by God. One can be attached to virtue out of vanity or even to our Lord out of selfishness, as did the holy women and the apostles in an excessively physical way. When something is wrong, mortification corrects it. [If] something is sinful, we must not look, but turn away. It is through the heart that evil must be corrected, by taking its affection and going to the Good Lord<sup>1</sup>. Even if the affection is good, we must beware lest self-love get the upper hand. [...] If we are not careful, self-love can pour itself onto the love of God and destroy it.

**The goal of Christian mortification is to make us live in the spirit of our Lord. Our Lord** has three spirits. In our body, a spirit of mortification and suffering; in our mind, a spirit of truth; in our heart, a spirit of love. If we want him to enter into us, he must sort out our affections. This is the purgatory of the heart.

**Mortification purifies us** of all that is bad, or that could become bad. It works like fire separating dross from gold. The gold is purified by a fire that consumes everything else. Our Lord's spirit of love works out this purification, consuming everything bad, guiding what is good, transforming it into something very good. The heart becomes alive. Earlier, it was heavily burdened and could not move, our Lord liberates it to move freely, no longer enchained. This is how mortification acts to place us in the true spirit of our Lord, our true goal.

**What must be done?** Ask our Lord for the spirit of mortification. That virtue will never be ours. Although we may perform some acts, it is only when death comes to cut the thread of life that we will have nothing to fear. This is why St. Paul said: *Clothe yourselves with the mortification of Jesus Christ; let your loins be girded with the mortification of Jesus Christ* (cf. Rm 13:14; 2 Co 4:10); *I resolved to know nothing except Jesus, and him crucified* (cf. 1 Co 2:2). He understood clearly that was the only road to heaven: *If we suffer with Jesus Christ, we will also be glorified with him* (cf. Rm. 8:17). Our Lord had already spoken clearly: *If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me* (Lk. 9:23). We must fully understand that we are united with him only through the cross., and consider mortification as a purgatory that makes us stronger.

A sick person who loves good health will not question a doctor or a pharmacist. When told that the medicine is bitter, he takes it. Even if a limb needs to be cut, he wants to live. Mortification will allow the lungs of your soul

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to breathe, if you fast strictly and you will eat<sup>1</sup> the Good Lord. The devil always tries to convince us that something is too difficult. Fear brings on the pain. My good Sisters, **become very simple and free, and you will understand what I am saying.**

**Points for reflection:**

During Lent the Church proposes to us a spirit of penance and conversion. Father Eymard helps us to see this as a means of spiritual growth. Do you recognize yourself in one or other of the points presented? Examine your past experience to find an event that illustrates one aspect of his teaching.

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## The Eucharistic Passion

Paris, Tuesday, February 19, 1861

**My Sisters, during this holy Lenten season only one thought should occupy your mind**, namely, the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. It must become your major focus, your great devotion. Your love of God will not be great or strong, unless based on the Passion. You will not understand our Lord's love, since one understands love only through sacrifices. Our Lord's greatest proof of love was the passion itself. For this reason St. Paul says that he loves *only Jesus and Jesus crucified* (cf. 1 Cor 2:2). Anyone who does not base his devotion on the passion of our Lord lives in illusion, or his love is still in its infancy. Our Lord said, No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends (cf. Jn 15:13). Since we were all his enemies, he could even have included enemies in his love.

**What should you do to honor the passion of our Lord** and make this devotion fully alive? Two things are involved: the real sufferings that our Lord endured at the time of the passion, and what he suffered for us. He loved us so much that he was led to sacrifice all that he had. On Calvary he gave us his humanity, his entire life. As St. Paul said: *Jesus Christ has loved me and has given himself up for me* (Gal 2:20). The great St. Paul is eager to suffer to profess his complete love for Jesus Christ, ever so small compared to God's love. In his letters, he is always speaking of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, as he does to the Corinthians: Have you forgotten the sufferings of Jesus Christ? Didn't I speak in so vivid way that you could practically see him on the Cross? When they argued among themselves: *I belong to Apollos; I belong to Cephas*, St. Paul told them: *Is it Apollos or Cephas who was crucified for you, who loved you to the point of crucifixion?* (cf. 1 Cor 1:12-13) Not at all.

Therefore, my Sisters, **meditate on the mysteries of the passion of our Lord**. Take them one at a time, so that your love can mature beyond that of a child. Otherwise, you will be accused of not honoring our Lord in the greatest proof of his love; you will not love suffering and mortification.

**What is the Eucharist?** Let us never forget why our Lord is present on the altar. What did our Lord Jesus Christ say? *This is my body, take and eat; this is my blood, take and drink;* in memory of what? Of his passion, because these words of consecration are the very words that our Lord used to foretell that he would be handed over to his enemies. In the Greek, the present tense is used instead of the future: *Take and eat, this is my body; this is my blood that is poured out for you* (cf. Mt 26:26-27), as though announcing two mysteries that are really one.

**The Holy Eucharist is the memorial of the passion of our Lord.** It continues the life of our Lord in our midst, his passion of love. His bloody passion is finished, offered for our redemption; but his Eucharistic passion is a passion of love, with our Lord still the victim. Risen to new life, he can no longer really suffer and die. But he takes on the form of a victim, and leaves us do the rest. When we now suffer in union with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, we return to him so to speak his redemptive life. Furthermore, we complete his Eucharistic life. St. John says : *I saw a Lamb that seemed to have been slain* (cf. Rev 5: 6), but not dead. Why? In order to tell us that we must die for him. He cannot die because of his resurrection; he must die in his members to continue his mission of redemption. To understand this, you should enter into the Eucharist. The details will become clearer. Enter into the Eucharist, and you will see our Lord continuing his passion there in a most loving way.

In the Garden of Olives Jesus is betrayed and sold by Judas (cf. Mt 26:48). How many other Judases still betray and sell him? Reflect on the time of the Institution of the Eucharist until today. Formerly catholic nations have become heretics by hundreds of thousands. Later, the Mohammedans spread in Asia, rather took over half of Africa and Asia. These heretics and Mohammedans had been catholic. And the Protestants, numbering in the millions, were all catholic. Among the Catholics themselves, how many are unfaithful Christians, unfaithful priests! There are plenty!

**This is the broader passion of our Lord**, much greater and sadder than that of Calvary. Our Lord is no longer sad, because he is in his glory; but if he could weep, he would have reason to do so. [...] Don't the angels have reason to be sad? Doesn't Jesus in the most Blessed Sacrament seem to be more abandoned than in the Garden of Olives? His apostles were present, even if not very helpful. Nearby he had the Blessed Virgin, his mother.

Don't you notice that Jesus is alone? Even with perpetual exposition, isn't it scandalous that practically no one comes to adore our Lord? They say that's our responsibility. When there is exposition, the king is on his throne and a plenary indulgence can be gained... Our Lord **is not recognized**, everyone stays home. People of faith would all arise. Various devotions take precedence over our Lord. If there is no one of note, people stay away. Do they come only for the sake of persons? Today, churches are empty. People want personages, not our Lord. All would be attracted if there were beautiful music or some famous preacher. Here, there are a few people who come regularly, but in the provinces churches are closed in many places because there is no one coming. Our Lord is alone. Why doesn't he leave? Some day he will.

**Think of the wicked treatment he received before Annas and Caiphas** (cf. Jn 18:12ss). Does he not receive similar treatment in the Eucharist? With the evil blasphemies of newspapers and secret societies, no one has ever been persecuted and maligned like our Lord. This is the hour of hell, very different from the Passion when the Jews had to put him to death because they had no faith in our Lord. Today, some Catholics abuse him. Other wicked treatment and sacrileges also thrive. Sacred hosts are trodden under foot, used for magic, given to animals and to the Jews, without our knowledge. If we became aware of the passion of our Lord in the Eucharist, it would suffice to make us die of sorrow. Although our Lord foresaw all this, he accepted it to come to his children.

**He is insulted before Annas and Caiphas.** This reminds us of the scandals of priests and religious, since all heresies began with bad priests and bishops who went astray, who were unfaithful to their mission to guide the Church. Heresy never started with the faithful, but with priests. **Before Herod: our Lord** has been scoffed at for eighteen centuries by learned men. Even today, profane science robes him, so to speak, with a robe of ignominy and disdain (cf. Lk 23:8ss). **Before Pilate** (cf. Jn 18:28ss), he is confronted with force. For three hundred years, the emperors used force against Christians. All heresies used the same means. Who supports our Holy Father today? No one; his only help is in prayer. There are so many Pilates!

Many hold their positions, fearing to confront wicked men. They have no fear of good men, but still hand our Lord over to the crowds! Will they kill him? No. They have already drawn his blood to the last drop on the Cross. They can blaspheme and insult our Lord, but they can no longer kill him, since he is risen, and will remain until the end of time.

**What can we do?** Honor the crucified life of our Lord in his Eucharistic passion. The first Calvary led to the second, and we were all there. Let us honor our Lord, with the sentiments of the Blessed Virgin. She was constantly concerned with the sufferings of her divine Son. She knew each of his sufferings from the time of his birth to his death on Calvary. Join her, and St. John. He was the only apostle there. Join St. Mary-Magdalene and the holy women gathering the blood and tears of our Lord (cf. Jn 19:25-27). Like a family member of all who were there, you can easily take on their thoughts and feelings. The Church no longer sings *Alleluia* and sets aside its festive garb. The Church repents, suffers, groans, lamenting over her children who have done wrong. The devil is very active at this time, and many evil men refuse to recognize our Lord!

### **Points for reflection:**

Meditation on the Passion of our Lord is one way of allowing ourselves to be touched by his Love. It leads us to the mystery of Eucharist. Reflect on the Eucharistic Passion of Christ as it unfolds even in today's world. What aspects of today's society do you see being referred to?

## Reparation. The Words of Our Lord on the Cross

Paris, Friday, August 19, 1859

**My Sisters, do not forget the role of reparation, especially on Friday,** or whenever you adore on the other days, in the morning or evening. Actually, the evening is the best time for reparation and propitiation, as you recall the crucifixion of our Lord, our priceless redemption. One is better disposed through union with our Lord. One has a special grace that speaks to the soul and senses; there is something easier and more touching, while the topics under consideration become more striking.

**One can adore with an adoration of reparation in several ways.** The best is to make it with our Lord on the Cross, offering to the Heavenly Father the sufferings and crucifixion of our Lord for those who offend him every day. One can make reparation through our Lord by participating in the sufferings of his body and soul, begging pardon, offering the sufferings of his body for the sins people commit with their bodies, and the sufferings of his soul for internal sins.

**Offering our Lord in this way** is the best way to make a good act of reparation. While it is true that he offers himself, I advise you to offer him also, and to join him in offering yourself, uniting your small daily sufferings to his, offering our Lord to himself. This is an excellent way of reparation.

**One must pray to make reparation for the sins of the whole world;** first our own sins, then for the sins of those in high places, the sins of priests and persons consecrated to God. They offend him so much, due to their high position and many graces. The fault of a child is more painful than that of fifty thousand strangers, likewise that of a spouse against her husband. The closer the relationships, the greater the pain. If you knew all the offenses, sins, and sacrileges of priests, religious women, and those in the world who have made the vow of chastity, you would not have enough tears to shed. Our Lord is so offended! Even if there were only a few, there must be reparation. We may often have become indignant over Judas, but others are even more to be blamed. Although Judas knew that Jesus was a good man, he did not know that he was his God.

Why didn't our Lord place certain limits to prevent any sacrilege from offending him personally? Bad priests should not dare celebrate Mass out of fear of being struck by lightning. Persons of rank, like sovereigns, do not allow armed assassins to approach them. Yet, our Lord allows them, and even covers them with his mantle to hide them from view, to protect the honor and dignity of the priesthood. One might say, he's going too far. But that's the extent of his love, so that good persons will not be shocked and become the first to keep their distance, considering themselves unworthy.

**All these things fill one's heart with sadness.** You may not be aware that there are priests who forget their duties. Even if they are not sacrilegious, they become oblivious of what is truly important. Today, I saw a renegade priest begging for food. Unhappily many are easily tempted, making of their priesthood a mere trade for the acquisition of a property or a house, or to enrich their relatives. How sad this is! When a priest is transferred from a poor parish, people say he has been rewarded and must be pleased. Now he is in charge of a thousand five hundred and fifty souls! His stipend is high, his residence comfortable, and the church is also beautiful. As a result, he is truly rich. The care of souls is no longer his first concern. In days gone by the primary objective was the conversion of sinners. Now a poor parish is considered an evil, especially if money is lacking. Priests have become enmeshed in worldly affairs, chatting among themselves about money and positions of dignity.

Sometimes, to encourage a priest, a bishop will give him a better parish, as like a promotion. This is a great temptation, not from the Good Lord's point of view, but from that of the people, who think that a priest must become a good administrator, to be named pastor of a district. How sad! Here, a pastor receives 4,000 francs, some up to 6,000. It is sad to see while they do good work, they are exposed to many temptations and end up unhappy. In the city, they are invited to parties and dinners. Busy with administration, celebrations, burying of

the dead, they would be more pleasing to the Good Lord if they prayed more and celebrated less, instead of spending the entire day around coffins. They have no time to visit our Lord and adore him! Poor priests! The devil encourages all these obstacles and people love to have a priest around to lessen their feeling of guilt. Pray for priests. They are to be pitied in the midst of today's world. Pray. This is our Lord's will.

**It's important to pray for priests.** If they are good, the faithful are good; if they are bad, so are the faithful. All revolutions come from the sins of priests, not from the sins of others, but from those of priests, even from only one, according to St. Alphonse of Liguori. Crucifixion destroyed the Jewish nation, and there was only one crucifixion.

Among the ordinary faithful in the world, **there are very few who love our Lord!** They have time for the demands of the world, for make-up, and social visits, but have no time to pray. Their days are totally absorbed with family and social engagements. On judgment day, they will see if our Lord will accept these excuses. There is time for everything except God. The devil has so entangled worldly people that they have no more time for anything, having become instruments of Satan.

Many Christians have become pagan, unbelievers, philosophers, and atheists who offend our Lord! The greater number are renegades and apostates, composed mostly of bad Catholics, not Protestants. There are fewer wayward Protestants than evil Catholics. Voltaire was a Catholic, while Rousseau was a Protestant. But Voltaire and his followers, like d'Alembert were all Catholic. There is no doubt that our Lord sees the small nucleus of faithful ones that please him very much. But he has the heart of a father, seeing so many who go astray, offending him, and getting lost. The little good done by the faithful ones does not equal the evil done by the wicked. Good actions are much less numerous than crimes committed. But our Lord remains because of those who remain faithful. I'm not talking about the pagans, heretics, and idolaters who stay away from him through sin. For if they were faithful, God would send them an angel, a missionary.

My Sisters, when you love someone, your love is not limited to his times of honor and glory, but partakes of his pains and sorrows. Since you have three adorations daily, set one apart for reparation; it will be the best. **You are practicing these two things: adoration and reparation.** You are offering yourself and asking grace from the Good Lord, begging his mercy. To have pity on these poor persons is good, but to heal them is better. When a priest is lost, God will send his angels. He cannot resist a prayer done with trust. We could save the whole world if we knew how to pray. Prayer is more powerful than the malice of men and the devil. The Blessed Virgin converted the people of her time. Those who were not converted had sinned against the Holy Spirit (cf. Mt 12:32). We cannot say, however, that all the other sins were against the Holy Spirit. The prayer of a Christian is the prayer of Jesus Christ, accompanied by penance. How did the saints pray? They simply had recourse to God. **Reparation must be an essential part of your life;** since your spouse is always crucified, you must always be ready to console him.

**There are other ways to sympathize with the sufferings of our Lord and to intercede with him for sinners. One that I like very much is to use the words of our Lord on the Cross, making reparation to God the father, and to Jesus Christ by means of his own merciful words.**

**The first word: *Father, forgive them, they know not what they do*** (Lk 23:34). They do not recognize you in the Blessed Sacrament, for they are blind. As our Lord prayed for the executioners, the gravity of their sins is diminished. We must ask mercy, using these words for each one: My God, grant pardon for these sinful priests; they are our leaders, your members, your crown. We must give him reasons; although he knows them already, he wants us to express them. We must then reason out, argue, quarrel, and beg for mercy. There are so many people who do not know you; they do not realize that you died for them. Admittedly there are some who do know, but let your goodness then be greater than their wickedness, your grace stronger than their temptations; pardon them. After that, you can speak to Jesus Christ: If they knew your goodness and mercy, perhaps they would surrender; if only they experienced the joy of loving you.

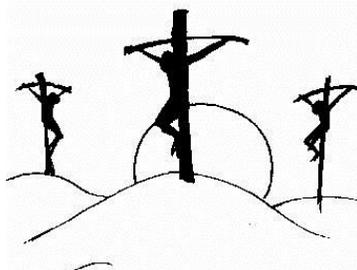
Then, repeat it again, since love always repeats itself. Always with the same goal, one repeats the same prayer, even if it seems to be always the same, that's the right thing to do. One must employ one's imagination, seeing our Lord on Calvary, admiring his goodness, addressing him with his own words. The imagination, the heart, the body, the will – everything is focused on him without distractions.

Move on to the other words: *Remember me*, says the good thief, *when you come into your kingdom; Lord, remember me at the hour of my death* (cf. Lk 23:42). The good thief makes a beautiful profession of faith: *We have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal* (cf. Lk 23:41). He has no fear of the executioner; since he is on the side of justice, he fears nothing. He turns towards the one he considers as truly just, our Lord, and calls him, Lord. Omitting other details, he simply calls him his Lord and God, and makes his request. To a person in high authority, one does not say: Pray. But this is his Lord and God. This confession is much better than that of St. Thomas (cf. Jn 20:28). He calls him his king: Give me the last place, for I am a miserable sinner. Our Lord responds: ***Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise*** (Lk 23:43). We must remind our Lord not to forget us and all the others, and ask him to bring us to his kingdom.

**Make reparation through the Blessed Virgin**, begging her heartily at the foot of the cross. She was offering her son for the salvation of the world, and offering herself to him. It is there that, for the first time, she is mother of everyone, and their salvation is very dear to her heart. We must offer our Lord the anguish and tears of his mother. It is very easy to offer the Blessed Virgin to our Lord. We must do so, since she is the great mediatrix, becoming one in her. We should pause for a while, especially if the timing of our reparation is the hour of the death of our Lord. There is a difference of one hour, more or less, with Jerusalem a little south of us. Before three fifteen, we stand before our Lord on the cross. But after that, the Blessed Virgin remains there on Calvary as the model of reparation. We can spend more time in reparation with her.

**The fifth word: *I thirst*** (Jn 19:28). Our Lord is thirsting for souls, their salvation, to see the glory of his heavenly Father established throughout the universe. How shall we quench that thirst? Since he is thirsting for souls, the way to satisfy that thirst is to offer ourselves as bail, to become the victim. Doing this in general or having particular persons in mind, we will indeed slake the thirst of our Lord.

***My God, why have you forsaken me?*** (cf. Mt 27:46) We entreat our Lord not to abandon poor sinners, to pardon them. We beg him not to strike them, to give them a year, two years, three years, ever more time, not allowing them to be struck by death, by the devil. Time is needed to place fertilizer around the tree (cf. Lk 13:8), that it may not be cursed. We appeal to his goodness and mercy; we argue with him (cf. Gn 18:16,33; Ex 32:9,12,32), since we must wrangle from our Lord the things he finally grants to those he loves. **Finally, you entrust your soul to our Lord, as you entrust to him the souls of these poor persons. You can then say, they will be saved.**



### **Points for reflection:**

St. Peter Julian tells us that we have a mission of adoration and reparation. He invites us to share the sufferings of Christ. He suggests various means of reparation. Which one corresponds to your personal grace? Take note of the Scripture passages quoted here. Which one touched you the most?



## The last days of Holy Week

Paris, Tuesday, April 3, 1860

Here is the schedule for the coming week. Tomorrow, there will be adoration only until noon, to give time to make the repository. Make your adoration in the morning. On Holy Thursday, there will be Mass and Communion in the morning, so that you can eat something. Adoration will be as usual, except there will be no Benediction. On Friday there is the Mass of the Presanctified, and you will still come for adoration. There will be the veneration of the Cross and the Divine Office. Likewise on Saturday, the Mass as usual is at eight o'clock, since that is the most convenient time. In the Roman liturgy, as you know, we receive Communion on Holy Saturday.

What will you do this week? Personally, since I cannot give you any other special conference: the First Communion retreat will use up all my time.

**This week we celebrate the mysteries of the Passion. They are great and solemn; meditate on them. You must enter into their spirit, and follow the grace of each day.**

Tomorrow, we recall the betrayal of Judas. The Church has always considered **Wednesday** as a day of sadness. It is a day of penance in many religious orders. When permission is given to eat meat, Wednesday is excluded. On that day, our Lord was sold. This crime is often repeated through bad Communions, and the Church remembers this by the penance that she requires from her children.

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**Holy Thursday** recalls the institution of the Holy Eucharist. The Church forgets about Lent and sings the *Gloria in excelsis*. But its joy is tinged with sadness since it is so closely linked with **Good Friday**. This joy was bought at a great price, so great a sacrifice that mitigates the full joy.

**This is your great feast, as well as ours**, since our Lord gave the Eucharist on Holy Thursday and we were present there. Surely, he had around him the communities that would be marked by the Holy Eucharist. Since we are the most privileged before him, our Lord blessed us ahead of time. Eighteen centuries is nothing for God; everything is present, and we were there. Our Lord was planning the priesthood that would bring Communion to the world, it was the First Communion. If it were not the Lenten Season, this would be our greatest feast, with adoration and the Institution of the Eucharist. We must celebrate it well, and thank our Lord for his goodness and love.

**In the Garden of Olives, our Lord** remained from nine to midnight perspiring blood and water. It was the passion of love of Jesus Christ. Good Friday will be the passion of his sufferings. You will not sleep, reflecting on this till midnight. The apostles were sleeping, since sadness tends to make one drowsy, as the gospel says: *He found them sleeping from grief* (Lk 22:45). As his hour approached, their hearts were closing. That's sufficient material for Holy Thursday.

**On Friday**, follow Jesus by reading the gospels, aware that at midnight our Lord was arrested, bound hand and foot, and, with a rope around his neck, led to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiphas. Treated like a scoundrel, he entered Jerusalem where, five days earlier, he had come in triumph. That's the way people are. From Annas he is led to Caiphas, amidst insults and beatings that would not be hurled at the worst of men. Evil leaders went to sleep, while our Lord was handed over to the soldiers of the high priest to be ridiculed all night.

The following morning, when evil leaders woke up, our Lord was led to Pilate for scourging and his presentation [to the crowds] with *Ecce Homo*. Pilate then forced Jesus across the city to see Herod, who despised him, and questioned him again. The Roman soldiers mocked and insulted him. At approximately nine o'clock, they began

the journey to Calvary. Only at noon, when the preparations were complete, was our Lord crucified. You should follow the way of the cross. **From noon to three o'clock**, ponder the Seven Last Words [Cf. Mt 27:46; Lk 23:34, 43, 46; Jn 19:26, 28, 30]. At three o'clock see the death of Jesus Christ, and notice what happens.

With our Lord in the tomb, **keep the Blessed Virgin company**. Alone and grieving, she had only a few poor Christians and St. John, who could hardly replace our Lord.

She had been very strong, the strong woman, till the very moment of our Lord's death. *She was standing* (cf. Jn 19:25), according to the Gospel, and not as represented in some paintings. She stood, facing the cross. When our Lord died, the redemption was complete. The Blessed Virgin must have collapsed under the weight of sorrow. The victory had been won; she could now weep freely with the apostles.

[...] **Follow the mysteries of this week**. The Eucharist should not absorb your attention at this time. Follow the mysteries, and take part in them. Usually we do this too lightly, in a superficial way. Let us enter more deeply into the sufferings and humiliations of the love of our Lord, so that we may love him more.



**Points for reflection:**

The Paschal Triduum is the high point of the liturgical year. It is the central mystery that gives meaning to all the rest. In this meditation we are invited to follow each event of the last days of the life of Jesus. What means will you use to allow yourself to be touched by this time of grace?