

POST #1 - INTRODUCTION

A HEART PIERCED BY THORNS

MEDITATIONS BY A DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER OF SORROWS

***Introduction***

The Heart of Jesus, the Sacred Heart, burning with love for us, on fire with love for us, and at the same time surmounted by a cross and surrounded with piercing thorns: this should be the standard for every man called to Holy Orders. By grace, to pattern his life, both exterior and interior, after the example represented by this sacred emblem: this should become the personal resolve and aspiration of every seminarian, every priest, and every bishop. Such resolve must become so much a part of him that it will continue, undiminished, through every moment of his priestly life.

In the image of the Sacred Heart, one sees flames of love, burning without destroying. Nothing else is in that Most Holy Heart: only love! In Our Lord, this love was all-pure, even as the Heart was all-pure. Human love was there, perfectly in union with the Divine Love. Human affection was also there, as part of that love, but that affection was free of all self-grasping and free also of every inclination to any disorder. Yet one must not think that this fervent love connotes a supreme form of “warm fuzzy.” Rather, this perfection of love brought with it—brings with it!—delight *and* pain, piercing pain, throbbing pain . . . not from the flames of love, but from the thorns surrounding.

Much emphasis has been laid in recent years on the need for everyone to *feel* loved, to know that he is loved. Much has been said about the joy of loving and being loved. Much has also been said about the need to have emotional and psychological wounds healed. While all these are true, one other very essential fact seems to have been omitted, or at least neglected: one who truly loves is willing to embrace sorrow and pain for the sake of the beloved and opens himself to being wounded. One who truly loves goes forth boldly, ready to do battle against the Enemy and to deliver his beloved from every form of unholy bondage. Therefore, if one is to be a priest who shares in the mission of the love of the Sacred Heart, his formation must from the onset include developing an openness to—*yes*, even an earnest desire for!—a sharing in the pain and sorrow of our Savior’s thorns and a readiness to serve as a modern-day knight of the Cross.

The declaring of such a goal, the issuing of such a challenge, is not enough. Every aspect of priestly formation must be brought into line with the challenge and purposefully directed to the attainment of the goal. For this to be effective, however, each must come personally to see the vision that is set before him. Therefore, in addition to the sacraments and personal prayer, immersion in the Sacred Scriptures¹ and meditating on the person and life of Christ must also have an essential and central role in the formation process, at all stages. Meditations that direct a consideration of the fervent love symbolized by the image of the Sacred Heart would be especially profitable.

Such meditations, however, need to go beyond the customary reflections that focus on the flames of love, the Cross, or the wound from the lance. They must go further and lead one to contemplate what is less often considered: the thorns encompassing and piercing that holy Heart overflowing with perfect divine and human love; the thorns drawing blood that drops like crimson tears . . . tears that speak of the tears Jesus

¹ This refers to a regular (even directed) reading of the Scriptures, particularly the Gospels, apart from the reading and study required for classes or homily preparation.

shed as a man . . . tears He shed before the tomb of Lazarus . . . tears He wept as He looked out across Jerusalem . . . and tears of sweat and blood that poured forth during His agony in Gethsemane.

Before You Begin

Since these nine meditations are composed as a sequence, with each successive one building on the previous, it is advised that the order in which they are offered be followed. As much time as possible, even an entire day, should be allotted for each. There has been an attempt to keep the writings brief so as to leave more time for personal reflection and to allow the Holy Spirit more space as the primary director in the heart of each participant.

For each of the nine, a short period of silent meditation should follow the *Scripture reading* and “*meditation.*” Following that, the written *reflection* initiates a time of private prayer and conversation with God. In themselves, these meditations are incomplete: they depend on the participant’s personal openness to the direction of the Holy Spirit and the work of the grace of God.

For the love of the Most Holy Trinity and for the love of the Holy Church, these meditations are offered to you, with the prayer that the Holy Spirit might be able to use them as He encourages you in the never-ending work of becoming fully conformed to the love in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Through her motherly intercession, may Mary, Mother of Christ and Mother of the Church, obtain for you every grace you need.

Primary Gospel for These Meditations

Luke 19:37-44

³⁷ and now as he was approaching the slope of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of his disciples began to praise God aloud with joy for all the mighty deeds they had seen. ³⁸ They proclaimed: “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.”

³⁹ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” ⁴⁰ He said in reply, “I tell you, if they keep silent, the stones will cry out!”

⁴¹ As he drew near, he saw the city and wept over it, ⁴² saying, “If this day you only knew what makes for peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ For the days are coming upon you when your enemies will raise a palisade against you; they will encircle you and hem you in on all sides. ⁴⁴ They will smash you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave one stone upon another within you because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.”

1. Tears for Jerusalem

A. Scripture reading:

Luke 19:37-44 (from above) Read again vv. 41-42.

B. Meditation:

Place yourself among the disciples and go with them as they accompany our Lord into Jerusalem. Let yourself picture what our Lord sees as He approaches the city. Remember that the people have been praising Him, shouting their *hosannas*. Now, looking at the city, Jesus weeps. He is not blinded by the people’s acclaim: He sees things as they really are. The question is “*What* does He see?”

Take a few minutes and picture the scene: people jostling and hurrying; poverty and wealth mixing together; Jews, Romans, people of others lands; men, women, children; the maimed and the robust. Do you hear the shouts . . . the clamor of voices . . . the sound of people shoving through the narrow streets . . . the clattering hooves of a Roman soldier's horse . . . the clang of steel . . . the *maa*-ing of the lambs? Allow yourself to feel the heat, the press of the crowd . . . to smell the blend of human and animal sweat . . . to catch a whiff of perfume and spices.

And now, having placed yourself there, remember: this could be any city in first-century Palestine, but it is not just any city—*this* is Jerusalem! This is the place of the Temple. In this city is the Holy of Holies. Recall the words of our Lord from a previous visit: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how many times I yearned to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were unwilling!” (*Luke* 13:34)

Turn your eyes now away from the city and look at Jesus. Look at Him as He is gazing on the city. Look at His face, His eyes. Christ is weeping. Do you see the tears coursing down His cheeks?—The evangelist does not write that Jesus was teary-eyed. He writes that Jesus *wept* . . . the tears flowed. We do not know which disciple saw this and later spoke of it to Luke. Perhaps one saw and quietly signed to draw the attention of the others. Or perhaps (we can only conjecture) it was Mary . . . perhaps later in the day she and her Son met together, and she asked Him, “Yeshua, what did You think when the people cried out their praises as You came into the city?” And perhaps He answered, “Oh, Mother, I looked out across the city, and all I could do was weep!”—We do not know, we cannot know, we do not need to know how the account came to Luke. What we do know is that Jesus wept. And since the Holy Spirit inspired the evangelist to write these words, we also know that God wanted us to know this, that the Father wanted us to know that His Son had wept. From the Heart of the Most Holy Trinity, these tears are revealed to us—the weeping of the Son of God.

C. *Reflection:*

Ask yourself, “Why? Why did our Lord weep?” Probably any of us could offer quick answers, but such might fail to really see to the heart—to see *within* the Heart of Christ. And we need more than just answers: we need to allow the Holy Spirit to use those answers to touch our own hearts, to teach and transform our hearts.

Spend time now in prayer. Let yourself be alone with our Lord and ask Him, “Why were You weeping? Why, Jesus? What caused You to weep?” Ask Him to open the eyes of your soul with His grace, so that in some small way you might see Jerusalem as He saw it that day. Ask Christ for the grace you need to be able even to begin to understand why He wept. Look at His face—streaming with tears—and dare even to ask for the privilege of being able to weep with Him, to weep simply because He is weeping, even if you do not understand why.