

POST #2 - THE PAIN OF COMPASSION

A HEART PIERCED BY THORNS

MEDITATIONS BY A DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER OF SORROWS



2. *The Pain of Compassion*

A. *Scripture reading:*

Luke 13:34-35 –

³⁴“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! ³⁵Behold, your house will be abandoned. [But] I tell you, you will not see me until [the time comes when] you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

Read also *Luke* 19:37-38, 41-42, from above.

B. *Meditation:*

Consider again Jesus looking at the city as the procession draws near. Place yourself again among His disciples. As the procession pauses, turn your eyes away from the city, away from all else, and look only at the face of the One you call *Master*¹. Watch His eyes begin to well with tears. Follow His gaze as He looks upon the crowds gathering for the Passover. Then, from somewhere in your memory, recall those words you had heard Him say at another time: “How many times I yearned to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were unwilling!”

Previously, we considered what Jesus was seeing exteriorly as He gazed at the holy city. This time, let us consider what our Lord may have been seeing interiorly, seeing in the hearts of those passing before Him. We can suppose that He saw mirth . . . and joy . . . some wonder and delight; and that He also saw suffering . . . and indifference . . . fear and anxiety. But let us look beyond the outward signs. Let us listen beneath the shrill cries and the hilarity. Let us look even deeper to what lies behind the masks of arrogance or pride, behind any façade of complacency or forced smiles. Let us ask Jesus to help us see as He sees . . . to see *what* He sees.

Look again at the Master’s face and follow His gaze. Do you notice that, while He sees the crowds, He is looking at each individual? He not only sees *everyone*: He is seeing *each* one. And being God, He truly sees and knows each heart. Sometimes we can look at someone and guess (make even educated, rational guesses) at what is in the person’s heart, at what underlies the anger or fear, or even see the sorrow that someone is trying to cover with laughter. But Jesus did not guess: He *knew*! For each individual before Him . . . for each person in that city—from the high priest on through to the most destitute beggar, from the eldest to the most newly born, from the most faithful through to the most dissolute—our Lord knew the heart of each one. He knew the history of sins committed *by* and of sins committed *against*. He saw hopes that were nurtured and hopes that had been dashed. He saw the beauty of hearts being transformed by grace; and He saw the hardness of other hearts, hearts hardened by the constant refusal of grace. By His divine nature, He knew the many, many times that grace had been offered and either accepted or refused . . . not only by those present in

¹ The title *Master* as commonly used by the disciples when speaking of Jesus connotes a respected teacher and leader whose authority is acknowledged. It is not used in the sense of a master and slave relationship.

Jerusalem on that day, but by those who had visited the Holy City over all the centuries.—He saw . . . He knew . . . and He wept.

Remember: Jesus is entering *Jerusalem*. This is the city that stoned the prophets, the city that so many times rejected the message and messengers of God. What were our Lord's words at another time? "How many times I yearned to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were unwilling!" How often during the short span of thirty-three years Christ must have longed to draw all the people into His Father's embrace! And how many, many times over the centuries!

Look again at the face of Jesus and watch those tears of compassion overflow. And what does Jesus lament, quietly addressing Jerusalem? "If this day you only knew what makes for peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes." He sees all the pain, the pain of the day and the pain of all the centuries, and He knows that already His message of peace has been refused. Yes, He hears the cries of acclamation, but He already knows how the week will end . . . and He sees ahead, forty years, to the suffering and devastation that is yet to come. He looks across the city . . . and He weeps.

C. *Reflection:*

As you go to our Lord in prayer, take a few moments to recall a time that you offered help and it was refused, or a time that you saw a person suffering and you wanted to offer help, but you knew it would be refused. How did you feel? hurt? resentful? Or did you feel only compassion and grief for the one who was hurting?—Jesus, being wholly without sin, would have had no selfish or disordered reaction to the refusals and rejection He faced. He would have paid no heed to any temptation to cushion the pain or to avoid it with a dismissive shrug. All the pain of compassion was experienced by Him, unhindered and unallayed.

Reflect on this also: Jesus knew that He was bringing the message of His Father's infinite mercy. He was not bringing words of human comfort or a temporary solution. And He was not only *bringing* the Father's message—He was Himself the message: He was (He *is!*) the Incarnate Love, the Divine Mercy. But although Jesus could see all the pain in every heart and knew that He had in Himself the remedy—the perfect and absolute remedy!—He was, in a very real sense, helpless. He could not prevent the refusal. He could not remove the gift of *free will*.

While we may not understand completely the tears that Jesus wept, we can know with reasonable certainty that they were tears of compassion. *Compassion* literally means a *suffering with*. In your time alone with our Lord, and as you reflect on His weeping, ask for this gift of compassion. Ask first to have compassion for those whom Jesus sees. Ask for the grace needed to be able to bear in your heart a suffering with them and for them. And then ask also for the gift of having compassion for Jesus, that you might not only be permitted to weep *with* Him but also *for* Him, for all the pain of heart He was suffering, for all the pain of heart He had suffered . . . and does suffer . . . and will suffer, on through the ages as grace is refused . . . as the message is rejected . . . as the Father's love is spurned.

Compassion is not something that stays in the intellect. True compassion is a grace that touches, moves, and transforms the heart. Ask for that gift of compassion. Ask for the grace of truly feeling and accepting the gift as it is offered to you. And ask the Holy Spirit to transform your heart with that compassion so it might become more and more like the Heart of Christ.