

POST #4 - A PENITENT HEART

A HEART PIERCED BY THORNS
MEDITATIONS BY A DAUGHTER OF THE MOTHER OF SORROWS**4. A Penitent Heart****A. Scripture reading:**

Luke 22:54b-62 –

⁵⁴ . . . Peter was following at a distance. ⁵⁵They lit a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat around it, and Peter sat down with them. ⁵⁶When a maid saw him seated in the light, she looked intently at him and said, “This man too was with him.” ⁵⁷But he denied it saying, “Woman, I do not know him.” ⁵⁸A short while later someone else saw him and said, “You too are one of them”; but Peter answered, “My friend, I am not.” ⁵⁹About an hour later, still another insisted, “Assuredly, this man too was with him, for he also is a Galilean.” ⁶⁰But Peter said, “My friend, I do not know what you are talking about.” Just as he was saying this, the cock crowed, ⁶¹and the Lord turned and looked at Peter; and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, “Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.” ⁶²He went out and began to weep bitterly.

B. Meditation:

Once again, place yourself in first-century of Jerusalem. The Master has been arrested and, like Peter, you have followed at a distance, a safe distance. Now you are standing in the courtyard, outside the house where Jesus has been taken. Take your place with Peter by the fire, or stand in the shadows where no one will see you—wherever you can imagine yourself most likely being if you had been there that night. Be honest with yourself and do not suppose too quickly that you would have followed John into the house. After all, this is before the Resurrection, before Pentecost.

What are you thinking as you stand there? What are you feeling . . . anxiety? fear? Probably *not* confident boldness! Your Master has been arrested. Even now He is being questioned. And then, you hear a servant girl speak to Peter. Perhaps you step back, deeper into the shadows. . . . The night moves on, but you continue to wait, tense and uncertain, yet unwilling to leave. Again you hear someone say to Peter, “You are one of them.” Again you hear his denial. Someone passing by asks you a question, and you jump, startled, and mumble your answer, fearful lest your speech betray you also. A third time you hear Peter deny knowing the Master . . . and you hear the cock crow. . . . Then Jesus turns and looks at Peter . . . and Peter, remembering, goes out and weeps bitterly.—But this, right now, is not about Peter: it is about us, each of us.

You are still there, and as Peter leaves, you glance at Jesus and see that now He is looking at you. He sees you, hiding in the shadows, and you know by His look that He has seen straight into your heart. What has He seen there? What hidden thoughts does He read there? And you, as you look at Him, are you able to read in His eyes even a little of what is in His heart as He looks at yours?

C. Reflection:

Be alone with Jesus now, and allow Him to look at you. Ask Him to help you see what He sees. In our earlier meditations, we looked at Jerusalem and the cities of today and sought to see them through the eyes of Christ. We sought to understand His weeping, and we asked for the grace of being able to weep with Him and to weep for Him. We sought to comprehend His sorrow, His grief, as He saw and knew the hearts of the

people, of each person, of each individual, passing before Him. Now it is a question of our own hearts . . . of my heart . . . of your heart.

Alone with our Lord, ask Him one question—ask it sincerely and *dare* to want to know. Ask Him, “Lord, what do You see . . . what are You seeing . . . when You look into *my* heart?” Very likely, as with most hearts, there are things there which give our Lord joy and others which cause Him grief. Let Him show you both. And since our meditations have been focusing on our Lord’s tears, trying to understand His tears, ask especially that He would show you anything in your heart that adds to those tears, anything that causes Him to weep.

Let this be more than a regular examination of conscience. Let it be, with the Holy Spirit leading you, a serious examination of heart. Go deeper than the sins you are easily aware of. The Enemy does not care too much if you confess those—he is very willing to let you see some of your sins. He is too smart to try to deceive you into thinking you are already perfect. But he will do everything he can to keep you from seeing—*really* seeing—what is in your heart. He knows that that is the important battleground. The Enemy does not want you to find the underlying attitudes, the misdirected motives, or the disordered affections and loves that grieve our Lord. He does not want you to see the things that weaken your will or distort your vision. Neither does he want you to see the grace-formed attitudes and movements that bring joy and delight to the Heart of Christ because seeing those might give you more hope, more strength, more courage. But be on guard because such an examination of heart is part of our spiritual battle. So it would not be amiss—in fact, it would be wise—to ask your guardian angel to stand by and protect you and shield you from the many distractions our Adversary is likely to hurl at your mind.

During this time, do not forget that we have been asking our Lord for the gift of true compassion, for the grace of being able to see others as individuals . . . of seeing each one as someone whom Jesus loves, as someone for whom He suffered and died . . . as someone for whom He even now is weeping. As was said earlier, it is possible that nothing causes our Lord more grief than the careless apathy and practical indifference of those who profess to follow Him. So ask the Holy Spirit to help you discern where your compassion might be falling short of what it should be, of what Christ desires it to be.

Remember: compassion is a *suffering-with in love*. It is an attitude and movement of the heart which, by the grace of God, transforms our lives. Our decisions, our motives, our desires, our personal interactions, even our purchases and entertainments: all are affected. What does your life—all that is on the surface—say about what is really in your heart? Ask the Holy Spirit to get beneath all the clutter of actions done or left undone, all the words said or left unsaid, and show you what is at the root. The actions and the words can give a hint, but dealing only with them is like weeding a garden by cutting off only the part of the thistle that is above ground. To really get rid of a thistle, you need to get the root and the runners, too—and it is a never-ending battle!

Earlier, we asked for the grace needed to be able to weep with Christ and for Christ. Now we need to ask also for the grace of being able to weep with Peter. Let your eyes turn again to the face of Jesus. He has gazed on Peter, and now—with infinite love—He is gazing at you. What is He seeing? What do you read in His eyes? Will you acknowledge your part in causing His tears and, like Peter, have the grace to weep?