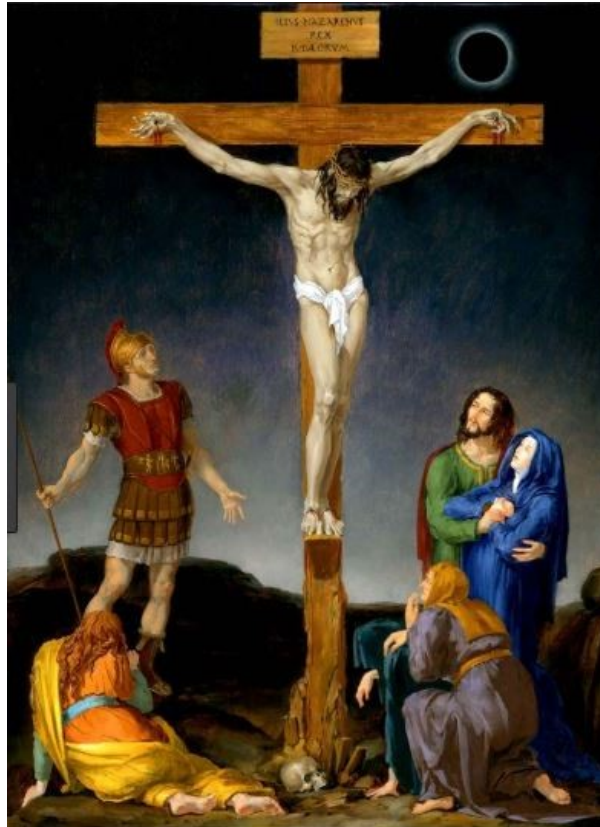


Sermon 4: The Passion of Jesus Christ



Preached in the Church of St. Paul's, in the Camp Marzio section of Verona, on Good Friday, April 3, 1801. - It lasted for about one hour and a quarter.

This Sermon was repeated, with the "Addition" found below, in St. Paul's, Campo Marzio, on Good Friday, April 4, 1806, in the evening. This lasted about one hour and three quarters.

Rev. Joseph Henchey, CSS

July, 2018

425:**SERMON 4****The Passion**

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426: The Passion of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. - *The just perishes, and no man lays it to heart...* [Ps 57:1].

Therefore, Jesus has died, and is there no one who is moved? So, the Just Man perishes in a sea, drowning in sufferings, and is there no one to weep? I have to say it again, *and no one lays it to heart*. And so, what is being said here: there is no one who is moved? It would be necessary to be on that mountain a few minutes earlier, when in all His anguish of dying, as He was just about to give up His last breath. One could note however, nature itself responded out of pity for Him: the sun hid its face, the rocks were rent, the earth trembled on its axis. Would I, therefore, see before me only these, my listeners, with tranquil faces, serenely looking on? Why is it these faces are not reddened with weeping? How is it that these hearts are not broken? Why is it that the by-standers are not profoundly moved? And these women, who weep so bitterly over the deaths of their own children, their husbands, their lovers - and these men who are so deeply upset by their own reverses, as well as of those of their fellow-citizens - they do not shed a single tear, nor do they have a simple sigh left for Jesus? Is it that only Jesus is not mourned, He is not wept over? Just listen to His own complaint regarding you: ... *Ad I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none...* [Is 68:21].

427: Why is it, my brothers and sisters, that there are such coldness, such ingratitude, and even injustice, and that those tears of compassion that you shed so prodigiously at the sufferings of just any poor soul, you so cruelly deny Jesus? Have you perhaps had a change of heart on this very point that the underlying motives - that are even stronger - that Jesus offers you for having compassion in His regard, to not move you? Or, is it that you just do not know these motives? Do you not realize that He has suffered? But, you do know through faith that He had to languish on a cross. Do you understand that He suffered all of this for you? Faith, though, teaches you that "... for us men and for our salvation..."¹ He did this for us. How can it be, therefore, that you are not deeply moved, believing all this? Should we conclude, then, that there is either lacking faith, and that your faith has

¹Nicene-Constantinople Creed

grown so languid? It cannot be this, my listeners. May heaven keep me from drawing any such conclusion so insulting to your piety.

428: What, then, is the origin of such insensibility of heart? The Holy Spirit responds for us: ... *The just perishes, and no man lays it to heart...* [Is 57:1]. He is just not considered, and this is why no compassion is given. This is the real reason, while the Philosopher also teaches on the other hand that to bring something within the sphere of compassion so that this will excite compassion in others, it is necessary that it be brought close ². Thus, we observe that the miseries of others far from us, either distant in space, or in the passing of time, either do not touch our hearts, or do so only in a very slight manner. For this reason, all I have to do is expose these facts, with all simplicity, as they unfolded. My task, then, is to render Jesus' Passion close, not only to your thought, but to your very eyes. In this way, the reality of it which is of all events. the most able to draw a compassionate response, will indeed become the object of your most actual and most tender compassion.

429: However, before going on in drawing out for you this sorrowful narrative, there is suddenly before me that warm Cross, that is still marked with the blood of this Just Man. I now place this before your eyes, prior to any other reality, to test the impression that such a sight is able to make on your hearts.

Holy Cross, that I should now adore as that which alone was worthy to bear that August Victim sacrificed on you for our sins - I know only too well the many and varied affections that you can arouse in the hearts of these listeners. You have now become the standard of their faith, the sure guide of their lives, the foundation of their hope, comfort in their wretchedness, the desire of the just, the terror of hell. But, I ask you that the sight of you arouse today only a sadness and a dolor that will be most vibrant for those terrible sufferings that you brought to our Jesus, when He united Himself to you out of love for us.

430: Show, therefore, to these souls who devoutly gaze upon you those cruel clefts of those nails made in you, first lacerating His hands, and then His feet. Show the very place where His head reclined upon you, expiring, as their loving Father, indeed their faithful Friend, their most tender Brother, their most lovable and most kind Spouse³. Lastly, show that bloodshed out of love for them, with which upon you still trickle and redden in long streams. In addition to the impression that you can bring about in them, let there be joined also the eloquence of

²St. Thomas Aquinas, 4 Sent., d. 17. q. 2. a. 1, sol. 1 ad 1 um.

³ Is this a hint of fr. Bertoni's "Espousals Principle"? [...some follow christ as friends – acquaintance; or, as sons and daughter [looking for the inheritance: or, rather as lovers, spouses who selfinterestedly love the Lord?

this blood, as the Apostle describes [**Heb 12:24**]. Let there be attained, therefore, through you such a great commotion in the hearts of these listeners that I believe I will see this very day, even though I cannot achieve this with my words.

431: I do fear, my listeners, that the sheer multiplicity of facts, even exposed in their natural simplicity, might impede your otherwise gifted intelligences, keeping them all straight in your minds at the end of my sermon. But, since you can all the more easily gather all this in by a single glance, I ask you that while I speak, you will keep in mind the various aspects of this mystery: first, the most perfidious betrayal; then, the most unjust sentence; and finally, the most torturous torment.

432: I am not unaware that you might be able to recall to memory other examples. It is not totally new in this world to see an innocent, virtuous, beneficent person thus betrayed by a friend, and very often one who has benefited the most from the friendship. Nevertheless, there could not be found any other person more innocent, and better than Jesus. Furthermore, there was no one more trusted and no greater beneficiary in this band than His traitor. For these reasons, there could never be heard, and never will be, a betrayal more perfidious than this one.

Just who is Jesus? Is He not that God to Whom by title of creation, conservation and final blessed end, all human beings are indebted for what they have, for what they are, and for all that they hope? Who would ever thought that among all human beings there could ever be found one who would prove to be more disloyal, more cruel, more ungrateful, that he would then decide to betray Him? And yet, such a person was found. He was Judas. He did not only think about this, or just plan it. But, he brought this evil scheme to term, that of betraying this most beneficent God. This God proved Himself to be so beneficent that out of greater love for humanity, He gave up His blessed trappings, and put on our flesh. He became like a king in disguise, and enjoyed treating with human beings on friendly terms. He did this with all His servants, and in particular, with Judas.

433: Maybe Judas did not recognize Him for what He was, in that His disguise was so complete? But how could he not have recognized Him after all those truly divine traits that He manifested? Further, did not Jesus many times, in the presence of Judas make known the nobility of His figure? Was not Judas an eye-witness of many of the miracles that He worked? Even further, did not Judas Himself work some of those prodigies with that totally divine authority that Jesus had communicated to Him?

Just think of all the honor that Jesus inspired for him, from the crowd, even the most uncouth. Even if this were not enough honor, Jesus had prepared a most honorable throne among the 12 places that

He had promised that the other Apostles would receive, when He would have returned with them to judge the whole world. Judas, among all these, was the most “domestic” minister, His very own brother and friend, with whom Jesus often dealt, with whom He often ate, and with whom He lived, without ever sending him away from His side.

434: That very same night in which Judas had determined to betray Him, he was sitting at the same table with Jesus. Jesus could see that his heart was evil, but even so, He did not send him away, He did not reprove him. Rather Jesus reached out to him, showing every manifestation of love. It was that very night when Jesus chose to wash the feet of his disciples, even those of Judas. And when He did mention His approaching death, and even gave indications of his own betrayal, He did this to shake up the hardened heart of Judas, who simply did not grasp these favors. He did all this with such a calm soul that at the same time, He communicated every reason for confidence in His pardon. It happens quite often that such ingrates, harboring evil thoughts of betrayal, are moved to make some response when they are treated well by their friend. It is hard to know whether such as these are moved more by confusion, or by stupor, but often they do make a switch, and transform their earlier hatred, that was so powerfully nourished in them, into like affections of love. But, it did not turn out this way for Judas, and this points out the fact that among betrayers, he proved to be the most perfidious.

435: As the Supper was drawing to a close, Jesus blessed the bread and wine: *...Take this,* He said to His Apostles [Mk 14:22, ff.]...This is my Blood... which shall be shed for you.... This is the Pledge that I leave you of My love: ... Do this, as often as you shall drink, for the remembrance of me... [1 Co 11:25]. And you, too, Judas, you take this Bread in your own hands. It is no longer bread, but it is My own Body, take it and be nourished. Bring your lips to this chalice - first drink My Blood and then go, and betray Me.

436: I tremble, quiver and shake. He, too, approaches, to receive His Master in this new and unheard of manner, which His charity imposed upon Him. He receives Him into that heart ... But, I can hardly go on. I can see clearly, my listeners, that you hardly have room in your hearts for the indignation that springs up in you at this malice. You are overwhelmed with stupor at such perfidy, and seek some explanation for what could ever move this wretch to such excess. And contrasting such virtue, such amiability in Jesus, you will encounter ever greater difficulty in trying to find it.

437: It seems to me that you may be making this conjecture: perhaps Judas had been wronged somewhat by his Master. He may have been placed below the other Apostles in some post of honor, and so his ambition was further strengthened by his envy. But these

conjectures hardly stand up. Only Judas was given the honor bestowed on no one else, in that he was placed over the meager resources of the little group. Do not try any harder to find out the reason for his perfidy, that I have already pointed out to you.

438: Let us, then, follow Judas, who has already set out to betray his Master into the hand of His enemies who seek to put Him to death: *...And He said to them, what will you give to me and I will deliver Him unto you...? [Mt 26:15]*. Here it is, this is the reason: sordid gain. What a criminal! But you might have thought that some large sum would have been thrust into Judas' hands, that would have befuddled the heart of this ingrate. But what did Jesus' enemies offer him? Just thirty pieces of silver! Just thirty pieces? When such a stingy hand is able to buy off a disciple, and a disciple who had benefited the most, to perpetrate such an enormous betrayal, they must have been sure of the refusal. But, what did Judas respond? What was his answer? He accepts without even bartering over the miserable amount and reached agreement on just how he would do it. Now I am sure that your hearts will burn with indignation against a betrayer that the world has never seen anyone worse. But, are you not likewise moved with compassion towards Jesus, Who is so good, so beneficent, so lovable and so ungratefully betrayed? What a blow this must have been to His heart. Through grace, let us return to Him, to see how He got through such sorrow.

439: We no longer find Him in the Cenacle room, as He has already left with His disciples. But, we will find Him a short distance away, in Gethsemane.

And here He is, and separates Himself a bit more in order to enter all alone that garden in which He was accustomed to praying the nights through. Judas had already set his plan in motion. Jesus was no longer able to hold back the anguish of His spirit: *... Then he said to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death... [Mt 26: 38]. ... For if my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it... [Ps 54:13]*.

But he is a person who is so dear to Me, and one for whom I have done so much good - this really pierces My heart.

440: And do you think that this betrayal was not sufficient to fill His heart with sadness? Just say, any of you who have experienced it, or who may have known this in the bosom of your own families - or, those who have loved with excessive affection and extended special kindnesses toward some disguised enemy who then about your present calamity. Just think of David when he had to flee by this same path from the rebellious Absalom [2 K 1:1, ff.]. David experienced the greatest pain in abandoning all at once his palace, his people and even his wives. There was great suffering in seeing all of this brought about by his most loved son. It was he who betrayed the King, the one who

incited the most faithful subjects in the plot against his own father. He even dishonored his own father's bridal chamber.

441: But, there is hardly any comparison in this! Just think of Jesus, and what a bitter sight that is! All the horrible apparatus of his sorrowful Passion is arrayed against Him. He could see that His most favored disciple was the very one who had handed Him over to the unjust judges, to those very cruel butchers, to those horrible sufferings. It is true, of course, that the horrible sight of the sins of the whole world that He was destined by the Father to carry was overwhelming. However, among all these, the most horrible aspect before His face was Judas' enormous crime: .. *Therefore, He confessed, he who has delivered Me to you, has the greater sin...* [Jn 19:11].

It is true that He felt the heavy weight of so many people for whom He died who would separate themselves from Him: and what a cruel separation He saw this to be! He could see in this how many would share in Judas' betrayal.

442: This is the very kind of argument that His envious enemies would raise against Him to withdraw the simple of heart from following Him! Just look, they would say, what a great success His disciples have had, those first disciples, and most steady students in His school. Did we not say that He is an impostor? If anyone would give credence to Him, then it should be His most intimate friends. But, you can see that these are the very ones who have raised up their hands in opposition to Him.

What do you think of all this, my listeners? Could Judas have wounded Him any more in life? Could we not say that this betrayal alone would be enough to overwhelm Him with sadness? Or, at least, would this not add one more very strong reason among so many others that had already invaded Jesus' heart? This injury by one so close, would this not have been a kind of *coup de grace* to his spirit?

443: And now just look at Him: even though Jesus is the stronger [Mk 3:27] and indeed is invincible, nonetheless, of His own free choice, to satisfy for our sins, He subjected Himself as man to those afflictions that we still experience. Even more, because of the superior knowledge of His mind and the greater sensibility of His heart, He was even further disposed to suffer all this. He is already being constrained to hand over His heartfelt freedom to that sadness that scourges Him, and He falls face first on the ground. Not even the very powerful resistance that He brought to opposing the dolor which oppressed Him was beaten back. this brought about His sweating right through His clothing in abundance, and dampened it, leaving many drops on the grass, and the stones on the ground under Him. This is a very strange sign of a totally new type of pain, supreme suffering.

444: Hurry, Judas, hurry! Hasten forward that band of assassins that you are leading with you. Even should you be unable to witness your Jesus killed by the weapons of His enemies to whom you chose to betray Him, you will take delight in knowing that you alone have killed Him, killed Him first with immense suffering that you brought about.

Alas! what will happen to Jesus? Have no doubt about it: there remains still so much for Him to suffer. However, an Angel comes down to comfort Him, and then we see that He even takes the first step to go to meet the betrayer who seeks Him.

445: *Friend, why have you come?* [Mt 26:50].

What is Jesus' response to all this? Judas approaches with peaceful air and reached for Jesus neck, to embrace Him. It seems, therefore, at long last Judas is beginning to be moved. What would Jesus' heart do if this were the case? How He would have willingly received him, how He would have comforted him, by giving him pardon for all! Yes, my listeners. He does not reject him, but receives him, allows Himself to be kissed, and then says:...*And Jesus said to him: Judas do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss...?* [Lk 22:48]. How can he betray You, Jesus, if he is coming to see your peace?

But no, my hearers. You can finally see the supreme perfidy of this betrayal Judas had already made some agreement with those soldiers who had to arrest Him. You can see that at the agreed upon signal, they charge Jesus, they bind Him, they drag Him away, they rain blows down upon Him, with sticks and they kick Him. And where do they drag Him? And here is still one more motive for your deeply felt compassion: an innocent man is being arraigned before the Tribunal, to receive from it the most unjust of sentences.

446: It would be, it is true, a major injustice to condemn to death even one who is truly guilty, without first having heard the case. But, Jesus is not the only one among the innocent upon whom a similar destiny has fallen, being dragged to the place of execution by an angry mob. He is, though, brought before a tribunal to experience deeply the pain that is all the more unjust in that His enemies wanted to go through the motions of making use of the organs of justice to condemn Him.

447: But how can you gaze on this scene, without an almost overwhelming commotion deep within your hearts? As you look at Jesus, innocent, alone and abandoned, even by his own, standing before those judges who are already His enemies - do you not see how they almost tremble in their haste to carry out their duty which they see as putting Him to death? They look for the witnesses, and even pay them so that they will bear false witness. They interrogate Jesus, and

then do not let Him respond - and if He remains silent, they take this for the admission of guilt. And yet, when He does open His mouth to speak, they punch Him in the face. I just do not want to lead your thought, and with that, your hearts that are already very sensitive, before tribunals such as these. But, this is where Jesus has been led, where everything has served to pervert justice, and where only anger, fury and tumult dominate.

448: Suffice it for me to lead you to Pilate's tribunal. He is a more reasonable and impartial judge for Jesus, as well as for the Hebrews, His accusers, since He is the Roman Governor. And so it was that Pilate, having examined Jesus in accord with the accusations leveled against Him, had clarified His innocence. He had been able to see that it was only out of envy that they wanted Him dead. He goes out from the Pretorium, where all His enemies were gathered awaiting His condemnation, and Pilate declares Him innocent. Praise the heavens, then. Jesus has received a just sentence. He had been betrayed by His own disciple, He had been judged unjustly by the priests who ought to have been favorably disposed toward Him, but finds justice before a foreign judge. I can see that you are consoled, seeing Jesus absolved by that tribunal, which alone had jurisdiction in such cases.

449: But, wait a minute! Do you not hear that those who earlier were judges, have now become the accusers, and that they are insisting on His death, and they even bring forward new charges? ... *We have found this man perverting the nation... saying He is king... [Lk 23:2]*. Jesus is brought back to be examined under this point. He confesses that He is indeed a King, but that His Kingdom is not of this world [*Jn 18:36*]. ... *If My Kingdom were of this world, My servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered...*

So much evidence is lacking for Him to be convicted of sedition, because it would be necessary to show the arms that He would have cached away, to uncover His secret plots. However, all His actions, His public statements testify to the contrary. So, the Judge goes back out and proclaims once more that he can find no cause in him. This is all the more significant in that even Herod himself, to whom Jesus had been sent, even though he was more versed in the Hebrew law, let Him go. Then Pilate makes the declaration that he would punish Him with blows and then he, too, would set Him free.

450: How is this explained? If Christ had been declared innocent, how can it be that He is first to be scourged, and then allowed to go free? What injustice is this? - you ask in complete wonder. But, hold back your indignation a little while against the injustice of a sentence such as this. In the interim, listen as Pilate continued the custom that at Passover there would be freed, at the request of the people, a person already condemned to death. Pilate leaves this up to the crowd to decide which of the two they would want to set free. They could choose

either Barabbas, who was a real criminal, caught in sedition, and homicide - or, Jesus. I can see, my listeners, that now you tremble all the more, seeing Jesus first declared innocent, and now placed side by side with one condemned. I know that He should not have to wait to be pardoned, as justice would demand that He be allowed to go free. But, what happens? In order to calm down the furor of His accusers, Pilate has decided to make the choice, and he turns toward the people.

451: Entertain no doubts about it. The people seemed well disposed toward Jesus. This multitude is made up of those blind men whose sight He had restored; of those lame whose limbs He had restored; of those mute to whom He had given the ability to speak; of those hungry people, who - after He had abundantly satisfied them - they sought to make Him their king; of those countless infirm, whom He had cured. What is there to be afraid of, then? And with all the less reason, because He is being put up along side of a criminal who was the most hated of all, an enemy of both the public as well as the private good.

452: *..Whom do you wish that I release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus...?* [Mt 27:17]. The people will certainly choose Jesus.

But, alas! everyone at this gathering of the people presented with the same question, replied to it at the top of their voices: *Barabbas, Barabbas!* [v. 21]. How perfidious they were! What, then, should I do with this innocent man, toward whom you are all indebted? *Let Him be crucified, let Him be crucified!* [v. 23].

What wickedness, ingratitude! What insult, what fury! Here will an innocent Man have to pay as one guilty? Is Jesus to be compared to a revolutionary? Pilate, though, who is convinced of the innocence of this Man, should not give in to such injustice. And yet, Pilate sends Him to be scourged.

453: Shortly he would deny Jesus the justice due Him as an innocent Man under judgment. What is worse, he still denies that He is guilty as He is being condemned. In such sentences imposed on all guilty persons, the judge first specifies how many blows to be imposed, what kind of instruments are to be used in tormenting Him, and the number of those involved in meting out the punishment. These would rarely inflict more blows than had been prescribed. But, Jesus hands Himself over to the discretion of the most irresolute ruffians. They were not content with the simple flagellation, but take up into their hands knotted clubs, heavy chains, iron switches. One is missing the point should he think that the number of the blows was counted, even though these were already prescribed according to their laws. They were not supposed to go over forty lashes, but in this case, they were multiplied without number. No effort was made to stop even when the blood flowed down His body in little streams. Up and down went the blows until the flesh was literally torn. No effort was made to stop until

the arms of the executioners had become tired, even though they worked in relay teams. Each new scourge attended to the task with new strength and renewed vigor, leaving Him alive only to entertain their cruelty.

454: My soul rebels in mentioning here that harsh joke played on that innocent Man, so badly wounded, and hardly breathing. There was placed on His head a crown of very sharp thorns, beaten down with plaited maces. There was placed in his hand a kind of reed for a make-believe scepter, and a red mantle was draped over Him. In this way, they made fun of Him, making believe that He was a king and bowing down before Him in fake acts of homage. You could hardly tell whether His physical pain, or His shame were the greater. While He was gasping for breath in real pain, they laughed, they struck Him in the face, pouring out over Him their inner bile in mockery.

455: And what court sentence ever allowed the executioners to mock Him as a false king? And all of this took place in the very hall of the Pretorium, under the eyes of the judge, and the judge made no effort to impede them. What a barbaric and unjust judge! Is this how, therefore, that justice, innocence are betrayed? What can you say in your own behalf? Is it that you wanted to allow the people this satisfaction, and then you wanted to let Him go? No, just no. Kill Him as well, kill Him! The people are not content with His death. All right, let Him die, then, but with a single blow. It makes no sense for you to cry out from your balcony: *...Behold the Man...!* [Jn 19:5]. And then show Him so disfigured, so lacerated,. The crowd once more took up the cry, even stronger, that He be condemned. Get on with it, then, condemn Him, and at least draw to a close by an unjust sentence the dolor of this innocent man.

456: And thus, my listeners, Pilate conducts his tribunal in public. He sits down in order to pronounce his sentence before the crowd. Just wait - you would imagine an unjust sentence: but, none will be worse than this one. I do realize that many others have been condemned, innocent though they may have been. But, if there have been unjust judges, where has there ever been one like this one? Was there ever one who first declared that he found no cause for the capital punishment, and yet condemned Christ to death? This, the height of injustice, was perpetrated on Jesus.

457: Just listen: *... I find no cause in this Man...* [Lk 23:4], then, such a person should be let go. No: for the judgment is that He should die, therefore, that He should be crucified. Therefore, let Him be condemned as you have asked.

Poor Jesus! He is yours, handed over to you, raging Hebrews. What else is left? You have already heard the sentence: He is in your hands. Even hungry lions and wolves do not leap on their prey as all do now:

the executioners, the soldiers, the crowd. The entire city is set in motion, and thus there is prepared the most terrible execution for Jesus.

At this point, however, kind listeners, I cannot go any further to present you an even more dreary scene, if first you do not grant me a brief rest, in order to give some comfort to my own heart.

[Translators' Note: there could be substituted here the addition that opens with the words: "...Listen to the uproar..." - cf. ahead, # 467].

458: The facts that remain now, beloved listeners, to be placed before your consideration are so cruel - that if I was not afraid of lacking excessively in my duties, I would omit them. But, if I do I would conclude my sermon very shortly, not mentioning a point I had proposed to myself to offer these very facts for your reflection. I do believe that you are already sufficiently moved by what you have heard up until now. Take some comfort at least that I will spare in part my own and your spirits, from an additional and even stronger pain. I will rescind now from the most bitter circumstances that you might experience, in theory, that the torment that Jesus underwent were the most terrible.

459: We are still talking about generalities. There is no doubt that among all the ways of dying, that on the Cross is the most bitter. We have this on the testimony of those gentile writers who lived in such barbaric times. In this kind of death there is no kind of torment that is unknown and not employed on these poor condemned wretches. In fact, in this form of execution of the Cross, the greatest torment that the poor guilty person suffers, reach precisely those parts of the body that are the most sensitive because of the presence of delicate nerves in them. These are the hands and the feet; the weight of the whole body itself hanging on the cross continuously increases the pain. The fact that the pain lasts for such a long time renders the death all the more bitter, as it is protracted over a longer period of time.

460: Even within this same general heading, just notice how the execution of Jesus surpasses and thus transcends other deaths on the Cross in its torments. He not only had His hands and feet torn open by the nails which brought their own pain, but also all the other parts of His body. Covered with wounds, as He was, He experienced most penetrating pain. These openings must have been all the more agonizing in that they were all reopened as His garments were stripped from Him in a very rough manner. These garments had been put upon Him after the scourging had become attached to the open skin. The cruelty increased as His arms were stretched beyond limit so that His hands could be nailed. This stretching of His limbs was so fierce that it disjoined all the bones from their natural place. This suffering was

augmented further when the Cross was allowed to slip into the hole on the ground prepared for it. The shock of the Cross falling into lace produced a horrible effect on the body hanging from it.

461: Job [7:5] complained that the Devil, allowed to be his tormentor, had left only the lips around his teeth healthy. However, Jesus' executioners were even more cruel than the demons. They did not spare over His entire body even a single member in which He was not wounded. They saw to it that not a single sense was without its own torment. With gall, they soured His taste; His sense of smell was tormented because they crucified Him in a place where dead bodies had been thrown, making a fetid odor. His sense of hearing was violated with the most horrible cries, with the insults and most biting slogans they hurled His way, along with the most gross curses.

462: For His sight, they prepared a particular torment, by crucifying Him between two thieves. Hence, anywhere He could turn His head, He would meet that shameful scene they placed before Him. And what I think was the torment to end all torments, before His eyes they hurled countless insults against those languishing in such agony. They ridiculed His moans, and laughed at His suffering.

463: I am just skimming over these facts: but, what do you think of Jesus' torment? What do you think brought the greatest agony? I have already pointed out that this punishment, to which He was condemned with the most unjust sentence, by the most perfidious betrayal. This morning I have placed before you Jesus' Passion, then, as a reality drawing the most sublime compassion. I have just noticed, however, that I have given every effort to rescind from the most bitter circumstances, in order to diminish that dolor that I see is gradually increasing in you. By so doing, perhaps I have only poorly corresponded to the affections of your hearts. I note that once you have come to consider more fully the situation of this Just Man, that there was the desire to remain with Jesus overwhelmed in His sufferings. It seems that there is the yearning not to deny Him the most just response of compassion. What is there to fear Should I not also carry out this pious desire of yours, of extending your tenderness Jesus' way?

464: And now, therefore, no longer just with your thoughts, but also with your eyes you can see His pain. *Behold, behold the Man!* [Jn 19:5]. Just look at this body, how lacerated it is with so many wounds. Not only have they taken from Him every beauty, all graciousness, but even the very figure of a man [Is 53:2]. Just look at His head, pierced by so many thorns. Look at His hands, His feet that are so wounded; this side that is gaping open. Look on in sadness, and this will help you grasp this scene and also will satiate the desires of your hearts. You could never weep over Him as He merits to be mourned.

465: And You, o Jesus, take note of the compassion that these pious souls offer you: for such is what I proposed for myself with Your grace obtained this morning. My purpose is to move them and soften their hearts with an affectionate compassion. This was all to dispose them to bring You some comfort in Your pain. It is now up to You to speak, to show and to make known to the what they ought to do and how they can afflicted bring consolation to Your most heart. Even before You open Your mouth, see that they are disposed to anticipate Your requests. Since they know that nothing can bring You more comfort than to see in them that fruit come to them for which You have suffered so much. All You want is for them to love You and to destroy all sin in them

466: They are already disposed to offer You their hearts, freed from every wrong affection. They are planning now the way, the means to be taken, and the time to give up entirely the sin in their lives. They are disposed to despoil themselves of that affection that is displeasing to you, so that they can begin a new conduct of a virtuous life, in accord with Your wishes.

But, no - they do not intend that all their compassion should be consumed in tears. They want the compassion that they feel for You should move them to console You with their deeds. Come now, give them Your blessing as a kind of pledge that their tears are pleasing to You, that their tenderness for You is beloved to You. our out on them the abundance of Your most efficacious graces, whence they will be moved when they proceed now to kiss Your wounds, and to mingle their tears with Your blood. they will be able to grasp and to carry out for Your comfort whatever You request of their hearts on this point.

[Here begins the third part, following a brief rest. This could substitute the paragraph above, that begins with the words: *The facts that remain now... -cf. # 458*].

467: Listen to the uproar! More than the sound of trumpets and drums, it is the unsettling roar of anger, fury, tumult, hoots and insulting whistling. It is like a sea of people in agitation. Christ is being dragged along the street, outside of Jerusalem, to the place of His execution. Why is there such a crowd? *Why have the Gentiles raged...? [Ps 2:1]*. To execute a malefactor, one executioner alone would suffice, and sometimes it is even hard to find even one. Is it that against this one innocent man, maliciously condemned, that all have conspired to torment Him? Yes, all play their part, since His personal torment is to be the most painful. All are there, of every order, class and condition.

468: There have been times that an innocent person was persecuted by many, but was always able to find some defense, refuge in others, or at least compassion. It is only Jesus, in being hated, all play their role to bring about His death. There are princes and ministers, Jews and soldiers, lay people and priests, nobles and the masses, learned and ignorant, citizens and foreigners, Jews and Gentiles, Romans and barbarians: all concur in this execution, of the most painful kind. All are able to have a share in it, to incite further the executioners. Some shout their insults from afar. Some seem to enjoy the sight of His spasms of pain in His death: ... *they stood up... met together...* [Ps 2:2].

469: How is it that there is such a furor in everyone, and how is it that in such furor there is also such harmony in such a disharmonious mob? This is what brings the greatest pain to the heart of that innocent Victim: ... *They are multiplied above the hairs of my head, who hate me without cause...* [Ps 68:5]. They give Me evil for good, hatred for love. What is the source, then for such wrath, for such fury? And just notice, my listeners, what wrath, and what fury! Just look: with a slow pace Jesus moves ahead, *led like a sheep to the slaughter* [Is 53:7], *for many dogs have encompassed me* [Ps 21:17], *wild bulls have besieged Me...* [v. 13].

470: Drained as He was from the excessive flagellation, they placed on His sagging shoulders the cross-bars of His gibbet. How barbaric, and cruel they are! Every step He takes, He grows more weary. He wavers, and falls. Just look at Him, o heavens! Look at Him, stretched out on the ground under this weight. Alas! Just look at Jesus, *the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people...* [v. 7], no longer a man, but He is a worm, crushed under those villainous feet. On the strength of the kicks and blows they rain upon Him, they vainly strove to have Him climb Calvary.

471: Still, what is the source of such fury in the human breast? But, it is not just human beings who are tormenting Him: the Devil himself is among His tormentors. For it is the Devil who, on entering into human hearts, changes them into such fury. Human beings assume his ancient livery against this man-God. Rather, it is not just a single demon, but all hell has broken loose: ...*this is the Power of Darkness...* [Lk 22:53]. Do not even begin to think, however, that it is from any sense of compassion in those inhuman executioners for the remainder of the climb. They only did this to keep Him alive for even more cruel, and more protracted torments.

472: And yet they had to harass one another to see who would carry the Cross in His place. And where are His friends who do not step forward, freely offering to carry it for Him? They have abandoned Him.

Hence, the distress of Christ had to be all the more painful as His torment was universal. His suffering was universal not only because it was brought on Him by all, but He hurt in every way possible for a human being to do so. He experienced anguish not only from His friends, but also in the loss of reputation. They dragged two thieves long with Him, and so, *He was reputed with the wicked...* [Is 53:12], being placed among the condemned and the evil. Thus, losing His reputation, He experienced a loss in the honor and glory due Him.

473: The Cross was the torment bringing with it the greatest shame. Such a death was the most shameful [Ws 2:20], *for he is accused of God that hangs on a tree...* [Dt 21:23].

There remained His robe. Despoiled of all else, even now His clothes were stripped off Him. He was stripped nude! and this in the sight of such a huge crowd! and it all took place at high noon! and on a high hills! *..He shall indeed be filled with reproaches...* [Lm 3:30], *shame has covered his face...* [Ps 68:8]. And that whole day long, the sham He bore wounded Him more, pierced Him more painfully than all His wounds, than all those openings brought to His body.

And now, where are the beauty, the decor, the most pure candor of those members? There is no beauty in Him, no comeliness [Is 53:2]. He is all one large bruise, one terrible wound.

474: Look over all the members of that body just to see if there is a single part that is healthy and without torment. There is no crown of gold, but one of thorns. The black tresses of His hair are all streaked with blood. His eyes are no longer those of a dove [Ct 1:14], but are daubed with mud, covered with dust and spittle. His cheeks are no longer rosy red, but are bruised, swollen by the slaps, the punches, His tresses totally bereft of comeliness. His neck, once a tower of ivory [Ct 7:4], is livid and bruised from the ropes they used to drag Him along like an animal. His shoulders, His back, His sides and legs, all are lacerated by the whips. And, o my God, on what a bed of pain they place Him now, and stretch Him out!

475: O God, how those arms and wrists are stretched and cut and by such crude knots. Now He is fully flattened out on the Cross. And His hands and His feet are contorted... those very hands and feet that offer themselves now to the nails. The measure is taken for the blows, and how heavy are the hammers raised above. Dear God! It seems that even before they fall, the blows strike my very heart... I cannot stand, beloved hearers, I cannot stand these particulars that are so atrocious, so sensitive. Let us proceed rather to consider the kind of pain being administered.

476: There is no doubt that among all the deaths that of the Cross is the most bitter. We have this on the testimony even of those gentile authors, who, even though they were living in the most barbarous times

in which there was no form of torment that was unknown, or unused to carry out execution on condemned unfortunates. These writers, therefore, can offer a sure witness. In fact, on the Cross the greatest torment that the wretched guilty one endured was suffered precisely in those parts of the body where the nerves are the most active. Hence, the most sensitive areas of all seem to be the hands and feet. The weight of the body itself as it hangs, increases continuously the agony. And the slowness of the distress renders the death all the more bitter, as it is all the more slow.

477: Not only are all the other forms of execution surpassed by that of the Cross, but all other kinds seem to be compressed and included in this one alone. Therefore, the gashes brought by the swords, the pulling and drawing of other instruments of torture, the tearing of the limbs, being crushed by wild beasts, all this followed by convulsions, the spasms of the most acute suffering - it was like a fire that burned deep within, literally broiling His members and slowly consuming Him.

478: Furthermore, along these same lines, just see how this awful pain inflicted upon Jesus almost exceeds, and it might even be said, transcends Him. The reason is that He was afflicted not only in His hands and feet, but in all the parts of His body. He was wounded in every way, and in an instant was the recipient of most acute distress. And these terrible wounds became all the more sorrowful as they were reopened as He as furiously stripped of His garments. These had been draped over Him after the flagellation, and had become attached to the forming scabs. This was all very crudely intensified when He was most roughly stretched out on the Cross to bring the arms to the holes already made to nail Him to them. This stretching was so excessive that His bones were dislocated from their proper place. His suffering was augmented even further when the Cross with Him affixed to it was raised up, and then dropped into the deep slit in the ground prepared for it. With this, His distended body was horribly shaken.

479: Job complained bitterly that the demon, who had become his tormentor, had left nothing well, other than the lips about his teeth [Jb 19:20]. Jesus' executioners, however, did not even leave a single member of His entire body unwounded. They even willed that not even any one of His senses should remain without its own particular torment. With gall, they embittered His taste: to torment His sense of smell, they crucified Him in that place which because of the number of bodies buried there, was most fetid; they continuously wounded His hearing with the most horrible shouts, with insults and the most biting sayings, and the most enormous curses. For His sense of sight, they had prepared its own particular torment: right before His eyes they hurled scorn at Him as He languished, they made fun of His groans and laughed at His pain.

480: And so, after having tormented His body in every way, they insidiously took steps to wound even more profoundly His spirit. What more bitter wound could there be for a loving heart than to see one's death being obtained, but being subjected to insults unto death, precisely by those for whose salvation He has chosen to die? And what deeper laceration could there be for that heart that is already wounded and full of compunction for the sins of all, of all human beings who ever were, or ever will be until the end of time for whom He underwent all this, and for each one is particular? Did He not suffer all this especially for those committing the horrendous crime of Deicide? Was it not He personally Who experienced most bitter contrition as if all these were His own sins, in that He had applied to Himself these words: ... *these are the words of my sins..* [Ps 21:2].

481: Nonetheless, Jesus prays even for them, and also excuses them: ... *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do...* [Lk 23:34]. Yet they do know how cleverly to curse Him: '*...He saved others..*', they derided Him, saying: '*Let Him save Himself...*' [v. 35]. And these are the leaders of the people, and there are Levites among them, and they are the well-educated among them who talk this way. As for the vile members among the crowd, and even the thieves crucified with Him, all join in insulting Him: ... *If You be the Christ, save Yourself...!* [v. 39]. At these wicked voices, the sun left this world, ... *and there was darkness over all the earth...* [v. 44]. And what about Jesus through all this? If even one of them would withdraw into himself and recognize his sin, Jesus is ready to say to him: ... *this day you shall be with Me in paradise...!* [v. 43].

482: But, even this actually aggravated His pain. Thieves are saved: "but, My People, My Chosen Nation; My dear Disciple, and Judas are damned." Only one repents and he will be followed by so few. The greater part of those for whom I suffer so much will profit nothing by My distress. What good will there be from so much blood being poured out? [Ps 29:10]. For many, all this blood will serve only for judgment [1 Co 11:29], and this Cross will prove only to be a scandal [1 Co 1:23]. He sighs heavenward, and then looks in great affliction toward the ground, and there He sees Mary.

483: At this sight, the bitter floods of compassionate suffering that had inundated the Mother's heart, turn in all their might an impetus, to the most bitter sea of pain [Lm 2:13]. They rush into the Son's heart, and He is overwhelmed by them, as this time the tide sweeps all in its wake.

Sharing thus in His pains, only increases them in the Son. The barbarians do not block her in this, but only deny her the possibility of extending comfort to Him. There is no veil allowed to cover the confusion of His nudity, nor is there permitted a drop of relief to His dying lips burning with fever.

Mary weeps, and with her, John does too: “... Ah, woman [Jesus no longer says, ‘Mother’] ... I now leave you. Behold the one who from now on will be your son in My place [cf. Jn 19:26]. ...And then He turned to the disciple... [v. 27]. And she, He said, now that I have to leave, will be your Mother”.

484: Now from that heaving chest, His panting breath blocks His throat. At the violent shaking of His body, all His members shake in convulsion, and the whites of His eyes appear. O God! Jesus is dying! But, no, my listeners: the end of His sufferings has not yet come. This is but the natural horror of death, it is the love for her life, and one that is so precious, and a life that is so dear. This combat between love and life together seem to exhaust His nature. It is a veritable flood of pain arising from every part of His body, and rushing up out of His spirit, that they seem almost to bring shipwreck to His heart. This distress transcends all human judgment, or experience, in that Jesus’ senses are the more perfect and thus more capable of suffering.

485: His Body is that formed of the most pure blood of the Virgin and through a miracle formed immediately by the Holy Spirit. So, in the words of St. Bonaventure⁴, His body was all the more delicate, and therefore, the more sensitive. The sole of His feet was more capable of pain than would be the pupil of our eyes.

Christ’s soul, both because of the sublime excellence of His mind, and the immense depths of His Heart, was, as St. Thomas teaches ⁵, the most disposed to be saddened to a supreme degree for all the motives for sadness that came to Him in abundance.

486: Would that at least this humanity that was agonizing in the sufferings and the sadness of the most tormenting punishment, have had at least some comfort from the Divinity, conjoined and inseparable to it! But, what do these words entail: *...My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me...?* [Ps 21:2; Mt 27:46] - if not to mean: is it not so that the Divinity, as far as easing My human nature from its distress, conducts itself with this humanity as though it were not conjoined to it by any union? And not only by a prodigious barrier there is kept in full His glory in the superior part of My soul - but, this very glory, immovable in Me, of a blessed fruition, also militates in Me to even greater discomfort.

487: Even if in others who suffer there is often mitigated either the sadness of the spirit, or the dolor of the body, by reflections that appeal to reason - in this case, by a certain redundancy of the superior forces over those that are inferior, there was closed to Me this path of

⁴St. Bonaventure [precise citation not given].

⁵St. Thomas Aquinas, III, q. 46, a. 6.

consolation. And so, since the way to every torment is open in My Body and in My Spirit, with all natural efficacy, thus - every sense, or strength, or potency, is allowed to suffer. this holds true in all intensity and purity for that sadness and that dolor proper to them.

O, all of you, therefore, who pass by today in compassionate meditation along the path signed by My pain, fix upon Me the look of your contemplation, ... *and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow...* [Lm 1:12]. O, my Jesus!

488: But, does not the sheer power of Your love not diminish Your pains, or at least, Your interior sadness? Is it not this powerful love that forces You to say: *...I thirst...!* [Jn 19:28]. Is not this the thirst for the salvation of souls, a thirst of suffering even more for their salvation?

So, my listeners, thus His sufferings increase beyond measure. Therefore, if He willingly assumed these in order to liberate us from sin, then He had to take them on in such quantity that they would be in proportion to the greatness of the fruit that He desired. This quantity and proportion He achieved not only by the strength and by the worth that His Divinity always united to His pain and dolor. Hence, even a single drop of His blood was superabundant in removing all the sins of the whole world. Even further, even according to His human nature alone, His distress would have had a certain sufficiency, and His pain would have achieved a notable satisfaction. The reason is that He emptied all of His blood from His veins under the crushing press of the most tormenting execution.

489: O Eternal Father! Your will, Your Decree is now accomplished by me. Now the human race is liberated from sin, not by power alone, indeed possible for Your omnipotence. But, all is accomplished with justice and with full rigor of justice, as Your violated honor required of Me: *... it is consummated..!* [Jn 19:30]. Your justice is satisfied. Enormous was the debt of human sin - and enormous were the pains that My will, in harmony with Yours, assumed in this torture. In this distress, My very life is now lost, and is rather consumed. *... It is consummated... Into Your hands I commend My Spirit...!* [LK 23:46]. And here, Jesus bows His head and dies.

490: So dies the Just Man. In a most tormenting torture, condemned by a most unjust sentence, by the most perfidious betrayal. Thus, Jesus' suffering ends. Here His enemies have ceased tormenting Him, but their cruelties have not yet terminated. They insult Him even in death, they lash out against His dead body. With a lance, they open in His dead body a large wound on His right side. The cruel iron penetrates right through to His heart, and the point comes out the other side. What cruelty! what barbarity! O supreme injury! even worse than the torture itself! O, our love, Jesus! O, who would give to us that dead and bloody body, that we might make reparation with the just

obsequies of our tears for the most atrocious injuries of those cruel men!

491: O my God! Look at Him, my hearers. Unleash your hearts, loosen the bonds of your tears, satisfy the warm affections of your compassion. The motive is all too just, honest - this alone is reason enough to cry, to weep. You are alone on this day to offer your compassion for this innocent, betrayed Man, this Just Man Who has been condemned, this Crucified Love. Weep for Him. He is Your Father, Your Redeemer. It was for you, for you, that He chose to die. This tribute of your tears is all that the One Who gave all His blood for you is asking.

492: O God! Stop ... What do I hear?... Alas, do you also hear the eloquence of this blood. I am shaking... and I tremble. And what about you? Is your heart still deaf? Well, must I tell you what I feel, that these wounds correspond to our tears? But, even better, pay close attention yourselves. Listen: ... *weep not over Me...!* [Lk 23:28]. Does this mean, then, that Jesus refuses the tribute of our tears? But, how can this be? Listen as He goes on: ... *but, weep for yourselves and your children...!* [ib]. O God! I understand You, I get it. Our sins are the sole reason for Your suffering.

493: Let us weep, then, Ladies and Gentlemen, let us weep, all of us. Mourn for Jesus, but let our hearts feel compunction. We are the cause of the death of this Just Man. We have betrayed Him, and how many times, and at what price! Just for some sordid gain, for some unclean pleasure. We have been unfaithful to promises made, ungrateful for gifts received, with no understanding of His love. we have been more perfidious than Judas, the traitor. What betrayal, what perfidy, what sin! Pardon, my Jesus, give me pardon: give vent to your tears always. Let us commit no more sins, no more sins.

494: O God, just what have we ever accomplished by sinning! What injury have we heaped on Jesus! We have placed the King of Heaven below the mud of our own bodies. What should have died in us was that degrading passion, and yet our evil will cried instead: Let Jesus die, let Him be crucified, but long life to that passion in us. What perversity of judgment, what injustice of choice, what disorder of sin! Give me pardon, O Jesus, pardon! Let us sin no more, no more sins! Death to sin, let sin be put to death! Our evil will is condemned to perpetual contrition. As long as life lasts, these eyes of ours will find good reason to weep - this heart of ours should feel sorrow - these members, suffer.

495: Give to us, O Lord, give to us these thorns that pierce the temples, the horrible fruit of our bad thoughts. Give us those nails, tragic result of our bold and lascivious hands and feet. Give to us this

cross, shameful accounting for our sin. Our pride, our anger, our gluttony, our lasciviousness, all are Your Cross. We have put You to death, we have crucified You. What cruelty, what barbarity!

496: And even dead, our scandals continue to lacerate this Body, to wound this side, to open Your Heart, to wrench from You the souls that are so dear to You, and to snatch them from Your paternal bosom. And your veins are emptied still, this blood is bludgeoned out by us. He is trampled underfoot on every corner, in every street, and in every square by so many blasphemies. He is trampled underfoot in these temples, at the very feet of these altars, with so many sacrilegious profanations. He is still being trampled underfoot in every place, at all hours, by all of us, washed clean from sin so many times by this blood - yet, we sin, and we go on sinning.

497: What supreme fury! What heights of cruelty! How excessive the sin! And should anyone not know what sin is, come to the Cross and learn. Right now, I myself will place it before your eyes, I will stretch it out at your feet. And whoever has not sinned, I am content that such a one would not have to weep this evening. But, we sinners, we who have re-crucified this Son of God so many times in ourselves - we who have trampled underfoot the Blood of the Covenant: we should weep, we should all weep, and weep even more.

498: This is most suitable for us, all of us who would merit to weep eternally, buried in hell, even below the perfidious Judas; worse than the evil Hebrews, even the very demons themselves. We have beaten all these in perfidy, in insult, in cruelty. It could very well be that the last blow awaits us in the next few minutes. Let us all weep, Ladies and Gentlemen, before this day of copious Redemption and Salvation draws to a close, and gives way to the day of wrath and vengeance. Let us cry at the feet of the deceased Christ, Who reaches out to us - before He turns in His Majesty and in His anger to pass judgment on our fault. Let us weep, Ladies and Gentlemen, let us weep even more. It is more than helpful for us to weep this day. For this is the day in which pardon is extended even to the crucifiers. This is the day in which Jesus manifests to us His Mercy and gives us His blessing as pledge.

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