

THE MORNING TRIBUNAL

In this conference, we are going to meditate on the pains and insults which Our Lord suffered at the tribunals of Caiphas, Annas, Herod and Pilate.

The *First Prelude* of this meditation is to call to mind how Our Lord was dragged before the tribunal of Caiphas where He was condemned as guilty of death; before the tribunal of Herod where he was mocked; and before the tribunal of Pilate by whom He was delivered to the Jews to be crucified. NOTE the patience with which Our Lord bore horrible insults and terrible pains.

The *Second Prelude* is to ask Jesus to grant you the grace you need in order to bear with silence and humility the degradations and pains that you must undergo in this world.

FIRST POINT

There has not been and will never be a man who has suffered or had to suffer such great wrongs and degradations as Jesus Christ suffered. It is not possible to combine in a single meditation all the degradations to which Jesus Christ submitted. Therefore we will only consider some of them. These alone will be enough to make us ashamed of our pride.

THE FIRST KIND OF DEGRADATION WAS THE FALSE CHARGES AND THE CALUMNIES --

@ There is nothing that more keenly wounds a man of noble and sincere heart than piling up false charges against him of things he would not even dream of doing.

Now, let us enter into the tribunal of Annas and Caiphas and hear the outrageous crimes that are charged against Jesus.

The witnesses are lined up and here are the charges they make:

- @ They say that He is a lover of wine;
- @ that He likes to eat with the publicans and sinners;
- @ that He is ruled by an intolerable pride, going so far as to claim to be Divine;
- @ that He would destroy the temple in Jerusalem;
- @ that He spreads impious doctrine and is introducing the people to idolatry;
- @ that He is a sorcerer and works prodigies with the help of the devil, with whom He has a secret compact;
- @ that He is a seducer and astutely plots the ruin of the chosen people...

They charge Jesus with all these crimes in the tribunal of the High Priest and of Pilate. These charges are circulated among the people and are spread in the neighbourhoods and public squares of Jerusalem.

THE SECOND KIND OF DEGRADATION WAS THE SCOFFING AND MOCKERY---

The wickedness of calling Jesus a blasphemer and criminal was not enough. It was also necessary to call Him a senseless fool. SEE HIM IN HEROD'S PRESENCE. Because He makes no answer to repeated questions but in His Infinite Wisdom keep silent, men call Him a fool, at the prompting of the king and courtiers, and, like a fool He is covered with a white robe, and amid the mockery and laughter of insolent people they lead Him to the public streets to Pilate.

After this insult another follows of which I would not know whether to call it more savage or more contemptuously insulting, this time in the place of the Roman Prefect. Incited to do so by the Jews, the soldiers decide to make sport of Jesus in a way no one but the devil could suggest. They throw a purple robe over His shoulders. Then they place a reed in His hand. Weaving together a crown out of rough, sharp thorns, they press it down on His head in order to make fun of Him as a make-believe king.

Their mockery does not stop here. To ridicule Him more, they bend their knees to Him in mock reverence; then they spew their filthy spittle into His Face and give Him a cruel beating. While the Heavens darken at the sight of this and the angels are bitterly weeping, a countless crowd pauses to look at the unusual spectacle, and add to the injury and mockery in their festive way by their applause.

THE THIRD KIND OF INJURY THAT WAS DONE TO JESUS WAS THE PASSAGE OF THE DEATH SENTENCE WITH ALL ITS BAD IMPLICATIONS ---

Pilate, who perfectly aware of Jesus' uprightness and innocence, in order to deliver Him, placed Him before the people, who had gathered beneath the balcony of his place. They were there to choose a man sentence to die whom Pilate would do the favor of sparing in honor of the Pasch.

They were to choose between Jesus and Barrabas. And who would believe it ? Against Pilate's expectation the choice fell on Barrabas, as all the people would cried out that Barrabas should go free and Jesus should be condemned. Now how is it that people want Jesus condemned and Barrabas released ? Who is Barrabas ? He is a criminal found guilty of sedition and murder.

And ought he be released and Jesus condemned ?

" Indeed that is what we wish when we commit sin. Let Barrabas live and let Jesus die! " What evil has Jesus done ? ...

Now if Jesus must die, what kind of death should He be sentenced to ? It would be very harsh to put Him to the sword.

Even so, He must die the most bitter kind of death and at the same time the one most disgraceful. He must die nailed to the cross --- the way the most infamous, the most wicked criminals are accustomed to suffer death. And He must die in between two criminals, so that all may know that He surpassed everyone in wickedness. This was what the people wish and was the sentence Pilate gave Him.

Thus Jesus was led to His death on the Cross amid the festive joy of the high priests, amid the blasphemous insults of the scribes and Pharisees, and amid the harsh mockeries of an immense crowd. It was exactly then that was fulfilled the prediction of the Prophet who, in the person of Jesus Christ, testified, " I am a worm and no man: the reproach of men and the outcast of the people." (Ps. 21:7)

LET US PAUSE here a little, and answer the questions that I am going to ask.

FIRST, I ask: Did the Eternal Father give an unjust sentence when He decreed such great, such shocking degradations for His Only-Begotten Son? NO, certainly not. Jesus had taken on Himself the liability of our sins by His own choice, and our sins called for this payment... infinite offense=infinite ..

SECONDLY, I ask: Would the Eternal Father do you any wrong to allow you insults and disgraces as great as the ones that He willed for His Only-Begotten Son to undergo ? NO, for sin deserves much; and rightly do you come to realize this from the outrages and insults done to Jesus, and rightly does your conscience accuse you of being guilty of many sins.

THIRDLY, I ask: If you believe that sin is something that deserves such ill-treatment, knowing that as you do that you have sinned, would your pride not be intolerable if you refused to bear even the slight contempt?

What would be the ingratitude if you were unwilling to suffer a bit of offensive treatment for love of Jesus, after He has suffered such great wrongs and such extraordinary offenses for love of you ?

NOW, LET US REFLECT AND ADMIRE THE ASTONISHING HUMILITY OF OUR LOVING SAVIOUR.

Being God Himself, Jesus is the Infinite Wisdom, who governs Heaven and earth, and here He is declared a dull-witted fool.

He is mocked as a make-believe King and people spit in His Face as though He was the vilest man in the world !

He, Who is Holiness Itself, from whom all gifts and Heavenly graces come is counted a hypocrite and a lover of wine !

He is charged with being a seducer and blasphemer;

He is called a Samaritan and a sorcerer and is counted worse than a murderer and an assassin!

Jesus suffers all this, and suffer it with awesome silence without the least complaint, with a meekness beyond comparison, without bitterness and with full resignation, without any regret that Heaven decreed this... WHAT HUMILITY !

This is truly a sacrifice, which of itself, is enough to give infinite pleasure to the Eternal Father and to give the hearts of all men a lesson of humility..

Now, let's consider the SECOND POINT.

There has not been a man in the world who has borne degradations and outrages as Jesus bore them. The Prophet, David describes the truly awesome humility with which Jesus bore insult and outrage, and He uses these words: " I, as a deaf man, heard not; and as a dumb man not opening His mouth." (Ps.37:14)

Ponder these brief words, and wonder at the immense humility that is hidden beneath the awesome silence.

1) jESUS WAS BLAMELESS -- and could never be charged with anything that was not upright, and He could never be rightly rebuked. The crimes with which men charged Him were evil

inventions of His enemies. If Jesus had chosen to speak , in a moment He could have made His innocence very obvious to everyone. He could have silenced His enemies before all the people and could have covered them with shame and embarrassment.

2) JESUS WAS ALL-POWERFUL -- One word of His was enough to cause blots of fire to shoot down from the clouds upon all His enemies and hurl them all into the abyss of hell. With just a word He could have caused all men to know His Divinity and He could have caused all Jerusalem to adore Him as the long-awaited Messiah.

3) JESUS WAS INFINITE WISDOM -- He knew that His enemies would become abusive on the occasion of His silence, and that they would not rest until they had seen Him die a disreputable death on a Cross. He knew that from His silence His beloved Mother and the Apostles would suffer extremely... He knew that when He hold His peace as He did, men would make it an occasion to discredit the miracles He had worked, to condemned His teaching as erroneous and to vent their rage against His newly founded Church. JESUS KNEW ALL THIS. Nevertheless these considerations were not powerful enough arguments to draw one word of His mouth to prove His innocence. He wanted to keep silent, and to keep silent up to his last breath.

How astonishing and how eloquent is this silence of Jesus! How sublime is this lesson of Jesus !
But alas! How few there are who imitate it!

Where are those souls who, when they suffer insult and reproach and outrage, know how to join Jesus in keeping silent?

There may indeed be men who know how to adapt themselves to other difficulties and mortifications, above all if they are undertaken through their own decision. BUT TO BE QUIET when people ridicule us, to love our cross of insult and calumny, to avoid explaining away unjust accusations against us-- A! THIS IS A BURDEN FEW BACKS WOULD CARRY!

But meantime it will always be an undeniable truth that Jesus Christ's example is the only road to holiness, and one who does not imitate Him will never be very worthy in His sight and will have no hope of reaching perfection at any time.

So to imitate Our Lord and thus become holy, let us learn to appreciate contempt and insults. The teaching of Our Lord in this regard outmatches all the wisdom of the world ! In suffering unkind criticism, contempt, and ill treatment, Jesus found only the beauty and desirability of these things.

When with a single word Jesus could draw in Himself much honor as there was contempt that He received, He preferred contempt rather than honor. So far removed was His affections from being set on honor, that He showed a desire for the humiliation.

Let us ask ourselves,

why should I not have the same sentiments that Jesus had and why should I not love what He loved ?

In this meditation, Jesus wants to teach us that we must learn through His example to regard contempt as something that overthrows our fiercest enemy, which is pride, as something that opens for us the entrance into the heart of Jesus, as something that ought to form the loveliest part of our glory in Heaven.

Also, Our Lord wants you to know that the most beautiful moment of your life was not when your heart was penetrated with a tender, sentimental affection for God and felt carried away with love for His Infinite Goodness. NO; rather the loveliest instant was when your actions were being unfairly interpreted and discredited, and the most beautiful occasion of offering God a perfect sacrifice was when people totally despised you and ceremoniously mocked you.

From this we found out that we were wrong in grieving when we should have rejoiced, and in running from what we should have sought, and in grumbling when we should have kept quiet.

Now that we know our mistakes, what should we do ?

We should do just as what Jesus did when the hour approached for us to suffer disgrace. "That the world may know, that I love the Father: ... Arise let us go hence." said Our Lord.

This is how Jesus spoke when, full of fervor, He submitted Himself to His enemies from whom He could hope for nothing but ill-treatment and slanderous insult.

When an occasion comes to us to suffer contempt and humiliation, we, likewise, will lift up our hearts, saying:

That Heaven may know that I love Jesus, I'll embrace these things gladly for love of Him...