



2nd Sorrowful Mystery: The Scourging

Fruit of the Mystery: mortification of the senses

To meditate on the scourging, we must set aside any false modesty in the face of the reality of the sufferings endured by Our Lord. Such an attitude would in fact be cowardice on our part, for in this unbearable scene, we are not mere distant spectators but leading actors. Through our sins, it is we who have caused Jesus to suffer all this. So let us begin to meditate on this mystery of the scourging by accepting to see its cruel reality, through the vision of Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich:



“Our Savior, the Son of God, true God and true man, quivered and writhed like a worm under the blows of these wretched men; his soft, clear groans could be heard like a tender prayer amid the sound of his tormentors’ rods. (...) The Savior’s body was covered with black, blue, and red marks, and his blood flowed onto the ground; He trembled, and his body was shaken by convulsive movements. (...) New executioners struck Jesus with whips: these were straps, at the ends of which were iron hooks that tore away pieces of flesh with every blow.(...)”

Their rage was yet satisfied: they untied Jesus and tied him up again, with his back to the column. Since he could no longer support himself, they passed ropes over his chest, under his arms, and below his knees, and also tied his hands behind the column. His whole body was painfully contorted: he was covered in blood and wounds. Then they pounced on him again like rabid dogs. One of them held a looser rod, with which he struck his face. The Savior’s body was nothing but a wound; he looked at his tormentors with eyes full of blood, and seemed to beg for mercy; but their rage redoubled, and Jesus’s groans grew weaker and weaker. (...) The horrible flogging had lasted nearly three-quarters of an hour. (...) I saw, on several occasions during the flogging, weeping angels surrounding Jesus, and I heard his prayer for our sins, which rose constantly to his Father amid the hail of blows falling upon him.”

This realization of what the flagellation entailed—where Jesus received more than a thousand lashes over the course of nearly an hour—is, of course, harrowing, but it is not meant to paralyze us; quite the contrary. Just as at Fatima, where the Blessed Virgin sought to make a deep impression on the young visionaries by showing them hell, this vision of Christ torn in every direction is meant to shake us, to give us a jolt. We must all ask ourselves: at the moment when the pain of each blow overwhelmed him, he saw me behind the executioner, offending him through my sins. Such a realization is a powerful remedy against our weakness and lukewarmness, and it gives us the impetus to ardently desire conversion.

Of course, we must not stop there; after the violence of the flagellation, we must then contemplate Jesus’ infinite love for me. It is by descending with Him into the abyss of His suffering that we can understand the power of His Love. How could my Divine Master, enduring such a thing, continue to forgive me and, above all, be happy in the depths of His being to be able to redeem me? How is such love from my Creator possible amidst so much suffering? How could He choose to be the One who has suffered the most in the world, if not to show us that He is the One who loves the most? Contemplating such love must take our breath away. And it is there that we can then begin to truly love Him, in deep admiration and immense gratitude. It is through this true love for Him that we will be able to convert and offer Him our own crosses, being happy to unite ourselves with His sufferings to make reparation for our faults and those of others. This is what all the saints have done.

Some will say: but why suffer? Why is it impossible to go to Heaven easily? Is this God’s plan? The answer is simple: it is not because of God that we suffer, but because of ourselves. Saint Alphonsus Liguori summed this up in a few sentences: *“Let us guard against thinking that God takes pleasure in our sufferings; He is not of such a cruel disposition that He takes pleasure in seeing the pains and hearing the groans of His creatures. He is a Master of infinite goodness, who desires nothing but to see us fully satisfied and happy; He is all gentleness, all affability, all compassion toward those who call upon Him (Ps 85:5). But our wretched condition as sinners and the gratitude we owe to Jesus Christ demand that we renounce, for his sake, the pleasures of this world, and that we wholeheartedly embrace the cross he gives us to bear in this life, to follow him on the path where he goes before us,*

burdened with a cross far heavier than ours; all this so that, after our death, we may enjoy a blessed life that will never end. God therefore does not wish to see us suffer; but, since he is supreme Justice, he cannot leave our faults unpunished; (...) he wants us, by suffering with resignation, to purify our consciences and merit eternal happiness." And to make us understand this clearly, He sent His own Son to redeem us and show us the example of obedience even unto the cross.

And the great saint continues: *"Carnal pleasures drag countless souls into hell; we must resolve to despise them with invincible constancy. Let us be convinced that, if the soul does not subdue the body, it will be the body that subdues the soul. We must therefore, I repeat, we must force ourselves to be saved. But, someone will say, I am not capable of this unless God strengthens me by His grace. Saint Ambrose replies: "You speak well: if you rely on your own strength, you can do nothing; but if you place your trust in God, praying to Him for help, He will give you the strength to resist all your enemies in the world and in hell."*

So the real question is not how to carry our cross, but how to place our trust in God in order to accept it? It is Saint Alphonsus again who gives us the answer: *"To suffer present evils with resignation and in peace, it is not enough to think lightly, and only occasionally during the year, of the Passion of Jesus Christ; one must reflect on it often and cast at least a daily glance upon the sufferings Our Lord endured for love of us."* Thus, the requests of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary bring us back **at the beginning of each month** to a sort of Easter Triduum: the Holy Hour on Thursday that unites us with Jesus' agony; Communion on the first Friday that unites us with Good Friday; and finally the Firsts Saturdays of the month, which remind us of the sufferings of the Blessed Virgin during the Passion and during her agony on Holy Saturday. Thanks to this return at the beginning of each month to the sufferings of Jesus and Mary and to their love for us, we can gather ourselves and regain strength to live each new month that begins in a holy manner. This is the purpose and summary of the requests made during the apparitions at Paray-Le-Monial and Fatima.

Does this seem too hard for our soft, pampered little lives? St. Alphonsus then asks us: *"So, while Jesus—innocent, holy, Son of God—wanted to suffer throughout His life, would we seek pleasure and rest? While he, to teach us patience by his example, chose to lead a life full of ignominy and suffering, both external and internal, would we wish to save ourselves without suffering? (...) But how could we think that we love Jesus Christ if we refuse to suffer for the love of Jesus Christ, who suffered so much for our sake? How can we boast of being disciples of the crucified Jesus if we reject or endure only with reluctance the fruits of the cross—such as suffering, humiliation, poverty, pain, illness, and everything that offends our pride?"*

Finally, let us pause for a moment to consider a point that is often overlooked when meditating on the Flagellation: the sufferings of the Most Holy Virgin. For she was present. It was there that her Mother's Heart, already tried by the early events of the Passion, was plunged into superhuman anguish. Anne Catherine Emmerich describes them briefly: *"I saw the Blessed Virgin in continual ecstasy during the flagellation of our divine Redeemer; she lived and suffered inwardly with unspeakable love and pain all that her Son was suffering. Often faint moans escaped her lips; her eyes were red with tears."* Then she fainted. *"Mary, having come to herself, saw her Son, torn to pieces, being led away by the archers: He wiped His blood-filled eyes to look at His Mother. She stretched out her hands toward Him..."* O Our Lady, this is what we have done to you as well. And despite this, you never cease to love us with your maternal Heart, doing everything to lead us to Heaven for eternity. While you would be justified in asking much of us to make amends for the pain we have caused you, on the contrary, you seek to ensure our salvation by making things as easy as possible for us. In particular, to obtain the grace of final perseverance and go to Heaven, you ask us only to dedicate a little time to you ^{on the first} five Saturdays of the month in a row...

What an admirable Mother you are!