

CHAPTER XVII

The Sufferings of Our Savior Jesus after the Denial of St. Peter until the Morning, and the Great Sorrow of His Most Holy Mother.

572. The holy Evangelists pass over in silence what and where the Author of life suffered after the ignominies in the house of Caiphas and the denial of St. Peter, but rather take up the thread of events when they speak of the council held by them in the morning in order to deliver Him over to Pilate, as shall be related in the next chapter. I had some doubts as to the propriety of speaking of this intervening time and manifesting that which was made known to me concerning it, for it was intimated to me that not all can be known in this life, nor is it proper that all be made known to all men. On Judgment Day these and many other sacraments of the life and the Passion of our Lord shall be published to the whole world. I cannot find words for describing that which I could otherwise manifest. I do not find adequate expressions for my concepts, and much less for the reality itself; all is ineffable and above my capacity. But in order to obey the orders given to me, I shall say what I am able in order not to incur the blame of concealing the truth which directly reproaches and confuses our vanity and forgetfulness. In the presence of heaven I confess my own hardness of heart in not dying of sorrow and shame for having committed such great sins at such a cost to God himself, who gave me life and being. We cannot ignore the wickedness and gravity of sin, which caused such ravages in the Author of grace and glory. I would be the most ungrateful of all the human race if I would not now abhor sin more than death and as much as the demon himself, and I cannot but intimate and assert that this is the duty likewise of all the children of the holy Catholic Church.

573. By the opprobrium which the Lord received in the presence of Caiphas the wrath of this high priest and of all his supporters and ministers was much gratified, though not at all satiated. But since it was already past midnight the whole council of these wicked men resolved to take precautions that our Savior remain securely watched and confined until the morning lest He escape while they were asleep. For this purpose they ordered Him to be locked, bound as He was, in one of the subterranean dungeons, a prison cell set apart for the most audacious robbers and criminals of the state. Scarcely any light penetrated into this prison to dispel its darkness. It was filled with such uncleanness and stench that it would have infected the whole house if it had not been so remote and so well enclosed, for it had not been cleaned or purified for many years because it was so deep down and because of the degradation of the criminals who were confined in it, for none thought it worthwhile making it more habitable for mere wild beasts, unworthy of all human kindness.

574. The order of the council of wickedness was executed. The servants dragged the Creator of heaven and earth to that polluted and subterranean dungeon, there to imprison Him. Since the Lord was still bound with the fetters laid upon Him in the garden, these malicious men freely exercised all the wrathful cruelty with which they were inspired by the prince of darkness, forcing His Majesty forward by pulling on the ropes, with inhuman fury nearly dragging Him, and loading Him with blows and execrable blasphemies. From the floor in one corner of the subterranean cavern protruded part of a rock or block, which due to its hardness had not been cut out. To this block, which had the appearance of a piece of column, they now bound and fettered the Lord Jesus with the ends of the ropes, but in a most merciless manner, for they forced Him to approach it and tied Him to it in a stooping position so He could neither sit down nor stand up for relief, forcing Him to remain in a most painful and torturing posture. Thus they left Him bound

to the rock, closing the prison door with a key and giving it in charge of one of the most malicious of their number.

575. But the infernal dragon rested not in his ancient pride. In the desire of finding out who this Christ was and of overcoming his imperturbable patience he invented another scheme, to the execution of which he incited the jailer and some others of the servants. He placed into the imagination of the one who held the key of the divine Prisoner, the greatest Treasure to be found in heaven and earth, the idea of inviting some of his equally evil-minded companions to descend to the dungeon and entertain themselves for awhile with the Master of life by forcing Him to prophesy or do something else strange or unheard-of, for they held His Majesty as a magician and soothsayer. Moved by this diabolical suggestion he invited some of the soldiers and servants, who readily consented. While they were discussing this matter a multitude of Angels, who assisted the Redeemer in his Passion, when they saw Him so painfully bound in such an improper and polluted place, prostrated themselves before Him, adoring Him as their true God and Master, and showing Him so much the more reverence and worship the more they admired the love which moved Him to subject Himself to such abuse for the sake of mankind. They sang to Him some of the hymns and canticles which his own Mother had composed in his praise, as I have mentioned above (566). The whole multitude of angelic spirits begged Him, in the name of the same Lady, that since He would not permit his own almighty power to alleviate the sufferings of his humanity, He give them permission to unfetter and relieve Him of this torturing position and defend Him from that horde of servants now instigated by the demons to heap upon Him new insults.

576. The Lord would not permit the Angels to render this service, and He said to them: “Ministering spirits of my eternal Father, I do not desire to accept any alleviation in my sufferings at present, but rather I desire to undergo these torments and affronts in order to satiate my burning love for men and leave to my chosen friends this example for their imitation and consolation in their sufferings, and so all may properly estimate the treasures of grace which I am gaining for them in great abundance through my pains. At the same time I desire to justify my cause, so on the day of my wrath all may know how justly the reprobate shall be condemned for despising the most bitter sufferings by which I sought to save them. Tell my Mother to console Herself in this tribulation, since the day of rest and gladness shall come. Let Her accompany Me now in my works and sufferings for men, for her affectionate compassion and all her doings give Me much pleasure and enjoyment.” Thereupon the holy Angels went to their great Queen and Lady and consoled Her with this message, although She already knew in another way the will of her divine Son and all that happened in the house of Caiphas. When She recognized the new cruelty with which they had left the Lamb of God, his most sacred body bound in a posture so painful and hard, She felt in her purest body the same pains, just as She had felt the blows, slaps and ignominies dealt against the Author of life; for all his sufferings as it were resonated in a miraculous echo upon the virginal body of the most sincere Dove. The same pains beset the Son and Mother, and the same sword pierced both their Hearts, with only this difference, that Christ suffered as the Godman and sole Redeemer of mankind, while most holy Mary suffered as a creature and faithful Coadjutrix of her most holy Son.

577. When She knew His Majesty had given permission for that most vile mob of ministers of evil, incited by the demon, to enter the dungeon, the most loving Mother wept bitterly at what was to happen. Foreseeing the sacrilegious intentions of Lucifer, She held Herself ready to make use of her sovereign power to prevent the execution of any designs upon the person of Christ which would imply indecency, such as the dragon intended by means of the cruelty of those

wretched men; for though all they did was most outrageous and irreverent in his regard, yet there were insults which would have been still more indecent by which the demon, not having previously succeeded, desired now to try the meek forbearance of the Lord. So exquisite and rare, wonderful and heroic were the doings of the Lady at this time and during the whole Passion that they could not worthily be mentioned or becomingly extolled even if many books were written for this sole object; and since they are indescribable in this life, we must leave their full revelation to the beatific vision.

578. The ministers of wickedness therefore broke into the dungeon, blasphemously gloating over the expected feast of insult and ridicule which they were now to hold with the Lord of all creation. Going up to Him they began to defile Him with their loathsome spittle and slap Him with incredible derision and contempt. The Lord neither opened his mouth nor made any answer; He raised not his divine eyes and lost not the humble serenity of his countenance. Those ministers of sacrilege wished to drive Him to some ridiculous or extraordinary saying or action so they could make a laughingstock of Him as a sorcerer; yet when they were compelled to witness his unchanging meekness they allowed themselves to be incited still more by the demons. They untied the divine Master from the stone block and placed Him in the middle of the dungeon, at the same time blindfolding Him with a cloth. Then they began to come up one after the other and strike Him with their fists, or slap or kick Him, each one trying to outdo the other in the vehemence of their blasphemous cruelty, and asking Him to prophesy who had struck Him. This kind of sacrilegious treatment these servants repeated even more often and continued longer than before the tribunal of Annas, to which St. Matthew (26:67), St. Mark (14:65), and St. Luke (22:64) refer, tacitly including all that followed.

579. The most meek Lamb silently bore this flood of insults and blasphemies. Lucifer, tormented by his anxious desire of seeing some sign of impatience in Him, was lashed into fury at the equanimity with which the Savior bore it all. Therefore he inspired those slaves and friends of his with the project of despoiling the Lord of all his clothes and pursuing their abuse according to suggestions which could only originate in the execrable demon. They readily yielded to this new inspiration and set about its execution; however, the most prudent Lady was moved to most tearful prayers and aspirations at this abominable attempt and interfered with her power as Queen. She asked the eternal Father to withdraw his cooperation with the secondary or created causes for such works, and She commanded the faculties of these servants not to perform their natural functions. By this command none of them could execute the indecencies which the demon or their own malice suggested to them. Some of these suggestions they forgot immediately, and others they could not follow up because their limbs became as it were frozen or paralyzed until they again changed their intention. As soon as they desisted the use of their limbs would again be restored, for this was not intended as a punishment but merely in order to prevent their practicing any indecencies. They were left entirely free to practice those cruelties or indulge in other sorts of irreverence which were not so indecent or were permitted by the Lord.

580. The powerful Queen also commanded the demons to be silent and forbade them to follow out the indecent intentions of Lucifer, their leader. By this command of the powerful Lady the dragon completely lost his power in that which the will of most holy Mary included in her prohibition. Neither could he further irritate the foolish indignation of those depraved men, nor could they go any further in their indecency than She permitted. But while experiencing within themselves such admirable effects of her commands, they did not merit to be undeceived or recognize the divine power, though they thus saw themselves alternately paralyzed and suddenly restored to the full use of their powers; they attributed it merely to the supposed sorcery and

magic of the Master of truth and life. In this diabolical error they continued to heap their insulting taunts and torments upon the Person of Christ until they noticed the night had already far advanced; then they again tied Him to the column, and leaving Him thus bound they departed with all the demons. It was ordained by the divine Wisdom to entrust to the power of most holy Mary the defense of the propriety and decency due to her most pure Son in those things in which it would be inappropriate for Him to be insulted due to the schemes of Lucifer and his ministers.

581. Our Savior was again alone in the dungeon surrounded by the angelic spirits, who were full of admiration at the doings and the secret judgments of the Lord in what He desired to suffer. They adored Him with deepest reverence and magnified his holy Name in exalted praise. The Redeemer of the world addressed a long prayer to his eternal Father for the future children of his evangelical Church, for the spreading of the Faith, and for the Apostles, especially for St. Peter, who during that time was bewailing his sin. He prayed also for those who had injured and tormented Him. Above all He included in his prayer his most holy Mother and all those who in imitation of Him would be afflicted and despised in this world. At the same time He offered up his Passion and his coming death for these ends. The Sorrowful Mother followed Him in these prayers, offering up the same petitions for the children of the Church and for its enemies without disturbance, indignation, or any abhorrence toward them; She only abhorred the demon as entirely incapable of grace due to his irreparable obstinacy. Sorrowfully weeping She spoke to the Lord, saying:

582. "Divine Love of my soul, my Son and Lord, Thou art worthy to be revered, honored and praised by all creatures, since Thou art the image of the eternal Father and *the figure of his substance* (Heb. 1:3), infinite in thy being and thy perfections; Thou art the beginning and the end of all sanctity (Apoc. 1:8). But if the creatures are to serve Thee in entire subjection, why do they now, my Lord and God, despise, vilify, insult and torture thy Person, which is worthy of the highest worship and adoration? Why has the malice of men risen to such a pitch? Why has pride dared to raise itself even above heaven?*" How can envy become so powerful? Thou art the only and unclouded Sun of justice, which enlightens and dispels the darkness of sin (Jn. 1:9). Thou art the fountain of grace, withholding its waters from no one. Thou art He who in generous love givest being and life to all who live upon this earth, and all things depend upon Thee while Thou hast need of none (Acts 17:28). What then have they seen in thy doings, what have they found in thy Person, which causes them to treat Thee in so vile a manner? O most atrocious wickedness of sin, which has so disfigured the heavenly beauty and obscured the light of thy countenance! O cruel sin, which so inhumanly pursues the Repairer of all thy evil consequences! Yet I understand, my Son and Master, that Thou art the Artificer of true love, the Author of human salvation, the Master and Lord of virtues (Ps. 23:10); that Thou dost desire to put into practice Thyself what Thou dost teach the humble disciples of thy school; that Thou dost desire to humble pride, confound haughtiness, and become the example of eternal salvation to all. And if Thou dost desire all to imitate thy ineffable patience and charity, then that is my duty before all others, since I have administered to Thee the material and clothed Thee in this body now subjected to suffering, wounded, spit upon, and beaten. O would I alone could suffer these pains and Thou, my most innocent Son, be spared! Yet since this is not possible, let me suffer with Thee unto death. And thou, O heavenly spirits, who full of wonder at the longsuffering of my Son recognize his immutable deity and the innocence and excellence of his humanity, seek ye to compensate for these injuries and blasphemies heaped upon Him by men. Give Him glory and

* cf. II Thes. 2:4 [Ed.]

magnificence, wisdom, honor, virtue and power (Apoc. 5:12). Invite the heavens, the planets, the stars and the elements to acknowledge and confess Him; *and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow*" (Lam. 1:12). Such and many more were the sorrowful aspirations of the most pure Lady in giving vent to the bitterness of her grief and pain.

583. Peerless was the patience of the heavenly Princess in the Passion and Death of her beloved Son and Lord, and thus what She suffered never seemed to Her much, nor her afflictions equal to those demanded by her affection, which was measured only by the love and dignity of her Son and the greatness of his sufferings. Nor did She in any of the injuries and affronts against the Lord take any account of their being committed against Herself; She did not reflect on the share which She herself had in them, though She was made to suffer so much by all of them. She deplored them only insofar as they outraged the divine Person and caused damage to the aggressors. She prayed for them all that the Most High might pardon them and grant them salvation from the evils of sin and enlightenment for gaining the fruits of the Redemption.

TEACHING OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MARY MOST HOLY.

584. My daughter, it is written in the holy Gospels (Jn. 5:27) that the eternal Father has given to his Onlybegotten and mine the power to judge and condemn the reprobate on the Last Day, the day of universal judgment. This is eminently proper not only so all sinners can see their Judge (Apoc. 1:7) who shall sentence them according to the most just will of God, but also so they can behold and recognize his humanity by which they were redeemed, and be confronted in it with the torments and injuries He suffered in order to rescue them from eternal damnation. The same Judge and Lord who shall judge them shall also advance the charge. Since they cannot answer or satisfy for the crimes with which He charges them, their confusion will be only the beginning of the eternal torments which they merit by their obstinate ingratitude, for then shall become evident to all the world the greatness of his most merciful and kind Redemption and the justice of their damnation. Great was the sorrow and most bitter the pains and grief of my most holy Son that not all would make use of the fruits of his Redemption. This same thought also pierced my heart and immensely added to the sorrow of seeing Him spit upon, beaten and blasphemed with such impious torments as cannot be understood in this present and mortal life. I understood all these sufferings properly and clearly, and this knowledge was the measure of my sorrow, just as it was also the measure of my reverence and love of the Person of Christ, my Son and Lord. But next to this sorrow, my greatest one was to know that even after all these death-dealing sufferings of the Lord so many men would still damn themselves within sight of all the infinite treasures of grace.

585. I desire thee to imitate and follow me in this sorrow and lament this fearful misfortune, for among all the losses sustained by men there is none which deserves to be so deplored, or which can ever be compared to it. My Son and I look with special love upon those who imitate this sorrow and afflict themselves because of the perdition of so many souls. Seek thou, my dearest, to distinguish thyself in this exercise and continue to pray, for thou canst scarcely imagine how acceptable are such prayers to the Almighty. Thou must remember his promises that those who pray shall receive (Lk. 11:9), and to those who knock the gates of his infinite treasures shall be opened. In order for thee to have something to offer in return, write into thy heart what my most holy Son and thy Spouse suffered at the hands of those vile and depraved men, and the invincible patience, meekness and silence with which He submitted to their wicked whims. With this example labor from now on so no anger nor any other passion of a daughter of Adam have any

sway over thee. Let an interior and ever active horror of pride, and a dread of injuring thy neighbor, be engendered in thy bosom. Solicitously ask the Lord for patience, meekness and peacefulness, and for a love of sufferings and the cross of the Lord. Embrace this cross with a pious affection and follow Christ thy Spouse (Mt. 16:24) so thou mayest at last possess Him.