

DAY 6.

Jesus is taken and bound.

COME now, and with inward sorrow and weeping eyes let us go and see where we have left our Lord Jesus Christ, namely, in the cruel hands of the savage Jews; our most innocent Lamb in the hateful and rough claws of lions, roaring for their prey. Let us see, I pray, in sorrow and affliction of heart, how shamefully and miserably these unclean dogs have treated the Lord of glory. He, indeed, the meek Lamb of God, spoke to them kindly in gentle words, and said: "As against a thief have you come forth to take Me. I was daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not take Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness." O you blind and wicked, what need was there to come in such numbers to take Him, Who of His own free will gave Himself into your hands? What need was there to search with lanterns and torches for Him Who came forth to meet you, and to speak to you? What will your arms profit you, when by one word He had laid you flat upon the ground? Or why have you sought by night, Him Who was daily with you in the temple? Truly, this is the hour of darkness. The children, I say, the children of darkness hate the light; therefore they desire to put it out, that they may remain in their darkness, lest their evil works may be made manifest. But in vain do they labor. As the Scripture said: His light shall not be put out by night, but it will shine the brighter, and will be lifted up on the candlestick of the Cross, that it may give light to all, who are in the household of the Holy Church.

Then all the disciples, leaving their Master alone in the wicked hands of the raging Jews, fled away. Oh! who can think of all the fierceness, and the wickedness, with which those savage wolves treated this our loving Lord, or of the sorrow, and contempt, and shame, that they brought upon Him? Let us for a little while, I implore you, endeavor in our imagination to compass this cross and affliction, in order to stir up our hearts to compassion and devotion. And although all that our Lord here suffered may not appear so plainly as from the Evangelist's words, yet may we gather and deduce them from those other words, in which he said: "They did to Him whatsoever they would." And who can reckon up all that these mad dogs worked against this innocent Lamb, if they "did whatever they would?" If they could not glut themselves with His Blood, and with all kind of cruelty against Him, when they had crucified Him, and shed His precious Blood like water, without also crucifying Him with their

tongue, and blaspheming and mocking Him, and even opening His Side when He was dead, what must they have thought to have done to Him while He was still alive? If at the end of His Life no kind of savage cruelty could satisfy them, what must we think they did to Him in that first mad rush upon Him, when their rage was at a white heat? Where is the mind that can understand, or the heart that can search out all the cruelty with which they treated our gentle Lord, after having for so long a time sought after Him, and laid in wait to kill Him, and so often threatened Him? With what tyrannical and cruel eagerness did they now seize on this innocent Lamb, when they had Him in their power, Whose Blood they had so fiercely thirsted after? All the savageness, the malice, the envy, the contempt they had so long conceived and borne in their minds, they now poured out at once upon Him. All the poison, bitterness, and rage, they had so long before laid up in their hearts, and carried about with them, and nourished, they now in one mass vomited out upon Him.

But let us go a little farther, and with great compassion, and hot burning tears, behold how our tender Jesus stood here alone among all those mad and raging hounds, forsaken by all men. Let us imagine, I beg you, that we ourselves are standing by, and are looking on, while they treat so cruelly this meek and gentle Lamb. One tore out the hair of His Head, another that of His beard. This one laid hold of His breast, that one of His neck. One stroke Him hard blows in the face, another on the neck, a third upon His Most Sacred Head. Some heap up spittle upon His loving face, and bind His blessed hands with hard cords. There are doctors who say that they threw an exceedingly heavy iron chain around His neck. Who can unfold how many blasphemies, how many reproaches and revilings, how many foul and shameful names our sweet Lord was compelled to hear? Truly, they knew not how to glut their malice, or by what shameful torments to rage against Him. For although they carried out against Him all that they could think of in their treacherous and cruel hearts, nor even then were able to glut their bloody thirst—yet far more did they burn, and desire to do, than they actually did. For the more wickedness and malice their venomous eagerness vomited out, so much the more they burned to devise all manner of treachery and deceit against Him. And because our Lord had cast them down with their backs upon the ground, so in their exceeding rage and fury, they in their turn threw Him with His back upon the earth, and kneeling upon His breast spat upon His sacred face and adorable mouth; and even more, as some doctors think, they so trod upon His breast, and covered His face and mouth with spittle, that by the stopping of His breath He would have died of suffocation, had not the power of His Godhead kept Him alive.

See here, in passing, how almost every step of Christ's Passion was itself a bitter death. Look now, O my soul, with the eyes of your heart upon your Lord and Maker, at Whose high Godhead the angels marvel, and see how exceeding low He had been cast down, and humbled for your sins. Marvel at, and tremble, and adore this wonder of all wonders! Behold, and with all care consider, how that most high Majesty had cast Itself down, and, as it were, brought Itself to nothing for the sake of your measureless vileness. But above all, weigh well that burning love, whereby He willed to do this, for He alone was the cause of His doing so. Contrast, I beg you, His highness with your vileness, and—unless I am mistaken—in the contrast your powers will fail you, your understanding will sway to and fro, your spirit will become faint, and your heart for exceeding great wonder will shake with horror. Consider, also, the greatness of your sin and the fearful weight and gravity of the debt which called for such a payment, and stood in need of such a Redeemer, and asked for so dear a ransom of reconciliation. For with nothing less than the very precious Blood of Christ, and the Death of the Son of God, could it be paid. Observe, too, O my soul, both your own hardness and dissoluteness, in that you have so little fear; and at the same time, be ashamed that you think nothing at all about sinning, exposing yourself so easily to damnation, when Christ had to redeem you with such measureless torments, and with such great labor.

After this, behold how those shameful ones trampled upon the Lord of Glory. Hear how He complained of this by the prophet, when He said: "Many young bulls have circled around Me, fat bulls have beset Me round, and many dogs have surrounded Me. Upon My back have sinners built, they have prolonged iniquity. I am a worm and no man, the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people." Oh! how deeply had the Majesty of God cast Itself down, in order to lift us up on high! How humbly had It submitted Itself unto all men, in order to wipe out our pride, and blot out our disobedience. See whether He was not, truly, a poor worm, trodden under the feet of the Jews, despised, spat upon, killed? Was ever a thief or a criminal treated so cruelly, so inhumanly, or disfigured so basely, as Jesus Christ the Son of God, to Whom had never clung the slightest stain of sin. O sweet Jesus, loving Lord, to what place shall I turn my heart for exceeding great trouble, when I see in what anguish and distress You were, when You lay so miserably among those madmen, who, all of them, like hungry lions, thirsted to mangle and tear You in pieces, innocent Lamb that You are, and how my sins were the cause of your Passion? Who, I ask, can have such a breast of steel, such a heart of ice, as not to be inflamed by love like this? For by that means, when we were about to be burnt up in the fires of hell, Christ took all this upon Himself, and suffered, out of His pure love, the

punishment due to our sins for our sakes. That we might be freed from the power of Satan and the chains of death, the King of Glory was taken prisoner, and bound, and led to death; and that He might lead us without punishment into the kingdom of heaven, He underwent all the punishment that we deserved.

As a result of which, O most merciful God, what can we render You in return for all this unutterable grace and love? Much have we until now marveled, that You were willing to sink so low as to take our human nature, and to be laid in a manger, but this humility, this utter casting down of yourself, is above all your former works. For now You are no more a man, but, indeed, an outcast and a worm. At your Incarnation You lay in the pleasant arms of your most tender Mother, but here You lay in the hands of the Jews. Then You were adored as God and Man, now You are taken as a thief. Then were offered Thee royal gifts, now You art smitten, and blasphemed, and despised, and mocked.

Weigh well with yourself, O my soul, what must have been the sorrow of the holy and heavenly spirits, when they saw their Lord and King, Whom they had ever held in such honor and reverence, brought down to such distress, and punishment, and wretchedness, so exceedingly humbled, despised, and shamed. We may, indeed, picture them to ourselves by a holy imagination, as falling down flat upon their faces in the presence of God the Father, and weeping bitterly and praying for their King. Let us also, therefore, share the same feeling with them, that we may compassionate our Lord Jesus Christ, for it is our sorrow and our wounds, by which He is afflicted and tormented; and with deep groans and sorrowful hearts let us fall down upon our faces before the Father, and say: "O most gracious Father, look down, I beg You, upon the sore distress of your only Begotten One, and the cruel torments where He is surrounded about. Oh! how could your tender Heart endure to see your beloved Son suffer such dreadful agony, and yet give Him no help or comfort? O Father, why have You forsaken Him? Why were your deepest fatherly parts moved not with compassion towards your beloved Son? Why had You no pity on the tears of the angels, so as to suffer them to avenge the wrongs of their Master and their King? What love had overcome You, O Father of Mercies? What is man, that You so loved him? You have pity upon sinful men, and forsake your only Son. That men might be exalted in heaven, it is for this that your Son is so shamefully humbled upon earth. That the guilty and wicked sinner might be freed from death, this is why your only holy One, Who knew no sin, is led to a miserable death! O most loving Father, what is this marvelous work which You have willed to do, that You lay all our sins upon your only One, and avenge them in Him, although He

ever thirsted after your honor, and did your will, and performed whatever was grateful and pleasing in your sight? Yes, You have horribly smitten this your beloved Son for our sins, and delivered Him wholly into the hands of the cruel Jews. What shall I give You in return, O Father of heaven, for all this utterly unfathomable and incomparable love, for all the faithfulness, and mercy, and loving-kindness, which You have shown to me, so worthless, and vile, and ungrateful, and dissolute a sinner? What gratitude, what praise and honor shall I repay You for all this? Oh! how can I ever give You even the smallest thing in return for love so far above all understanding?"