

## **DAY 20.**

*Jesus is given vinegar to drink.*

IN this way, then, as was said a little above, the cruel Jews led Christ to Calvary, a place of condemnation, accursed and shameful, full of the foul odor of dead mens' bodies and bones. And here it is lawful for us to gather that Christ's death was by far the most shameful of all deaths; and this for four reasons. First, indeed, because in that age crucifixion was the basest and most ignominious kind of death that could be inflicted on the very worst criminals. Secondly, because our Lord was crucified between two thieves, as the chief thief, as if He had been condemned for their crimes as well, and that, being subjected to the same punishment, might be supposed to be equal with them in guilt. Thirdly, because He was put to death, all naked, on the foul site of Calvary, a punishment which was accustomed to be inflicted only on notorious criminals. Fourthly, because He was put to death during the Paschal solemnity, as if His life had been so wicked and abominable, that it became a necessity to send Him out of the world as quickly as possible, being such a universal object of hatred, as well as a burden to all.

Now when they had come to this mount of Calvary, our gentle Lord became exceedingly worn and weak from excessive weariness and the heavy burden of the Cross, and they gave Him to drink, as was the custom to give to the condemned; not indeed sweet, but corrupt and acid wine, mixed with myrrh and gall, whereby those spiteful and wicked men clearly betrayed the bitter poison of their hearts against Christ, since they left not even one of His members unpunished. But Christ also wished to suffer in all His members, in order to perfectly heal us, who had been wounded in all our members. And because Adam had sinned through lust of the forbidden fruit, our Lord Jesus wished to atone for his sin by the torment of this bitter draught. Alas! how many are to be found at the

present day, who think nothing at all of offending God by the sin of gluttony, and of despising His law, whereby He has commanded us not to indulge our concupiscence, but rather to bridle our sensual appetites, and subject them to the spirit, that the flesh may not at any time rebel against the spirit, but be humbly subject to it, and obey it. Oh! How great at the present day is the number of those who stuff their rotten bodies, not by the eating of a single apple, but with many and different kinds of food, all of them exceedingly delicate, and thus offend God. These are they whose God is their belly, and who make the temple of the Holy Ghost a pot-house of devils; because, forgetting the form of their noble being, they have changed the image of the likeness of God into the likeness of senseless cattle. These are they, in a word, who fear not to destroy soul and body, in order to satisfy their sensual appetites and lusts. Now these, it is clear, do not once only give a bitter draught to Christ Jesus, but daily offer Him the bitterest of all gall to drink. In truth, these men have forgotten that soberness is a kind of preparation for all virtues, that it is the throne of chastity and purity, the purge of the soul, the mother of health, the way of heaven, the shield against the temptations of fleshly desires, and the discipline of the Christian life. For as the old serpent laid low our first parents through gluttony, so his weapons are easily turned aside through soberness. Nature, indeed, is itself greatly inclined towards evil and sensual delights, and seeks her own pleasure in many ways; hence it is necessary that a spiritual man should act prudently and reasonably on this point, so as to say with holy Job: "Before I take my meat, I sigh." And, truly, as Augustine said: "We ought to take food in the same way as medicine, with such moderation and discretion, that it may help us to serve God; and with such gratitude, that at each single morsel may praise our most kind Creator. Amen.