

## **DAY 26.**

*Of the glorious title of Christ's Cross.*

MOREOVER, Pilate, according to the custom of the Romans, wrote the cause of Christ's death upon a tablet, and commanded it to be fastened above the Cross. Written in three languages, were these words: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." And although Pilate was a heathen man, yet he wrote this at the dictation of the Holy Ghost, for the shame indeed and confusion of the Jews, but for the glory and triumph of Christ. Thus, although that wicked nation refused to acknowledge Christ as their King during His life-time, yet at His Passion, by that most true title, they were forced to acknowledge Him even against their will, and to confess the truth before the whole city. By this title the great cruelty of the Jews and Christ's justice are also declared, since in their wickedness they had put their own King to a shameful death, having no other cause against Him, except that He was their King. From this, also, it is clear that Christ's Death was undeserved, since no other cause of death was inscribed on the title, nor could be inscribed. Thus the power of God Almighty worked secretly in the unbeliever's heart, so that he could not write otherwise than as he was inspired by God; nor could he change it, although this was asked of him by the Jews. For the Jews would not hear Pilate, when he said he found no cause in our Lord; therefore, also, he himself gave not unto them, but said: "What I have written, I have written." Thus he avenged Himself on the Jews, so that all the fault and the evil fell upon them. By this title, too, our Lord was separated from the thieves, so that every one might perceive, that not for any crime of His own, but out of pure love He had laid down His life for His friends.

Now by these four words of the title are declared the hidden mysteries of the Holy Cross. By the first word, "Jesus," that is, Saviour, are expressed the cause and virtue of the Cross, for by the Holy Cross

we are all saved and healed; and as by the wood of disobedience we were lost, so by the wood of obedience we are saved. And this was why our Lord chose the death of the cross. By the second word, “of Nazareth,” that is, the “flower” or “green thing,” is shown to us that Christ hung not on the Cross, a small, dry, and barren wood, but like the grape upon the vine, or the flower upon the stem, since He is Himself the most noble flower of the rod of Jesse, where on the Holy Ghost has rested. Like the grape, too, He is pressed out, that He may minister to us in all abundance the delightful draught of His own precious Blood. By the third word, “King;” signifies to us the immense power and empire of Christ, which He won by the victory of the Cross, as St. Paul said: “Christ was made obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross; therefore, also, God has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name.” Lastly, by the fourth word, “of the Jews,” is declared, not only that He was King of the Jews, but also of all believers; for Juda signifies “one who confessed.” Hence our Lord said: “Whosoever shall confess Me before men, I also will confess him before My Father.” And, truly, as many as here refuse to confess Him as their King will one day feel Him to be the just Judge, Who shall condemn them, as He Himself said in the Gospel: “But these Mine enemies, who would not have Me to reign over them, bring them here, and slay them before Me.”

Moreover, this title was placed, not on the side of, nor under, but above the Cross. For although the weakness of His human flesh was tortured on the Cross, and was held up to contempt, yet above the Cross was His Royal Majesty, and there shone the glory of His kingdom, which He obtained not in time, nor from man, but which He possessed by His own divine power from everlasting. Again, this title was written, not in the language of one nation only, but in the three chief tongues: Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. The Hebrews, or the Jews, as being instructed in the law of the Lord, were at that time of all men the most religious. The Greeks were held to be the wisest of all. The Latins, or Romans, with whom lay the highest power, and who were lords of the whole world, were judged to be the most mighty of mankind. Now these three languages met together on the title of Christ’s Cross, and

bore witness that He was the King and Lord of all religion, and wisdom, and power; for the empire of the whole world, and all wisdom, and all religion and holiness alike bear witness that He was the true King of the Jews, that is, of believers, and that all power, and wisdom, and holiness flow from Him, as from their source.

Moreover, many of the Jews, as the Evangelist said, read this title. Let us, then, read it as true Jews, that is, true confessors of Christ, and not like the Jews of old, with contempt; but let us read it, and devoutly meditate on it, by ever impressing it on our hearts, and by wearing it as a shield against all temptations. For this is the title of His triumphant victory, showing how all the might of the enemy has been broken in pieces by the power of Christ's Cross. Let us confess that Jesus, that is, the true Redeemer of the world, is the Lamb without spots, that takes away the sins of the world; and let us humbly pray to Him that He would grant to heal our souls, and cleanse us from every stain of sin. Let us confess also that He is "of Nazareth;" that is, the "flower of flowers," the flourishing green thing, by praying that He may make us flourish and advance in all virtue. Let us confess, thirdly, that He is the true King of the Jews, that is, of believers, for all power is given to Him in heaven and on earth. For in Him the heavenly spirits rejoice, and with great reverence do they adore Him, trembling and frightened before His measureless power, marveling at His incomprehensible wisdom, praising His infinite goodness, confessing that He is the Almighty God, before Whom the armies of heaven fall upon their faces, and cast down their crowns, and giving back to Him the glory which they received from Him, by acknowledging that all honor and glory have come forth from Him, and to Him must be given back. If, then, in this way, we read the title of Christ's Cross, we shall be true Jews, true children of Abraham, and Christ will be our King and our Saviour, and He will reign over us, and defend us, and after this He will take us into His own kingdom, and make us joint-heirs with Him in the kingdom of His Father.