

## **DAY 16.**

*Jesus is crowned with thorns.*

AFTER that our Saviour had been so fearfully scourged, and hurt, and tortured, that no part in all His body remained whole, and His body itself was one wide gaping wound, dreadful to behold, they loosed Him from the pillar, and led Him about naked, and streaming with blood, looking for His garments, which, after they had stripped Him, they had scattered over the court out of anger and malice. Come, then, and let us see in what misery our loving Jesus walked along, full of sorrows, trembling with cold, streaming with blood, so that every step He took was marked with His red Blood. This is what the Prophet meant, when speaking in the person of the Angel, or of loving souls, to our Lord, he said “Why is Your garment red, and Your vestment like the vestments of those who tread the wine-press?” Jesus answered: “My vestments are red, O My bride, because I have tread the wine-press alone.” See now, O my soul! burning as you are with the love of God, see now, I pray, with inward compassion, how Your Beloved is being treated. You have indeed sinned through pleasure, and Christ has been punished in Your stead by mighty torments. You have obeyed the lusts of flesh and blood, and Christ has given over His own Flesh and Blood to such inhuman pains, for Your trespasses and sins. Moreover, when our Lord was putting on His clothes, these servants of the devil took counsel one with the other, and said: “That seducer proclaimed Himself a King, let us, then, treat Him as a King, and crown Him.” And straightway the whole cohort was pressed back into the praetorium, and Jesus along with it, so that He might be held up for scorn and mockery before all the people, and thus might be put to greater confusion. Then, again, with exceeding savageness they tore off His garments, which He had hardly any time to put on, and clad Him in a purple or scarlet robe. Next, they plaited a crown of thorns, and pressed it down on His sacred Head, and gave Him a

reed to hold in His hand, in place of a scepter; and they bent their knees before Him, and did Him mock reverence, saying: “Hail, King of the Jews.”

Go forth then, O you daughters of Sion, and see the true Solomon in the diadem with which His Mother crowned Him in the day of His Heart’s joy. Truly He has loved us, and He Himself has carried our feebleness, Himself has borne our infirmities. Oh! with no common compassion let us go and look at Him, and see how fearful were the torments which the Son of God underwent for our sins. Let us draw heavy sighs from our inmost breast, let all our members, all our veins, burst forth into tears, because we have been the cause of these sufferings. Let our heart melt for sorrow, and be all dissolved in tears, because we have crowned God, our Maker, so cruelly with our accursed sins. In truth, all these thorns plaited together, what are they but our cruel sins, which we have heaped one upon the other? By these do we day by day mercilessly wound the worshipful Head of Christ, and inflict upon Him far greater pain and reproach than they who tortured Him by these pains at the time of His Passion. For of them is it written “If they had known Him, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory.” But we both have known this Almighty King, and have clearly before us His will and commandments, yet we refuse to obey Him. We are not ashamed to resist so powerful a Lord, and to despise His commandments, yet He seeks nothing but our salvation, and that we may be joint heirs with Him in His Father’s kingdom, and that His Blood, and Passion, and labor may result in our salvation. Oh! who can ever find words to express how intolerable a sorrow our Lord Jesus was seized, when that fearful crown of thorns was pressed down upon His Head? For as some affirm, that crown was formed of sea-thorns, which are exceeding sharp and stiff. Nor, indeed, were they few in number, but they plaited them together into the form of a cap or helmet, so that the thorns were in great part fastened to the head, and with such great force and cruelty did they press down this fearful crown upon Christ’s sacred Head, that, as St. Bernard said, the thorns pierced into the brain, and penetrated through the veins, and nerves, and bones of the Head, so that His Blood became mixed up with His Sacred Brain, and flowed down in streams over His Face, and neck, and hair. Here let every

one weigh with himself what must have been this pain. For if even one large thorn was fixed upon a man's head, what would be the state of that man's mind? Truly, as Anselm said, "Christ's worshipful Head was punctured by a thousand thorns." Oh! let us impress His poor suffering form or image upon our hearts, so that it may never leave it more. Ah! how disfigured was this most beautiful of created forms! How destitute of all loveliness and beauty was Christ's fair face, all swollen, as it was, from the numberless blows and wounds of that night, and torn by the finger-nails of His tormentors, and made foul with their spittle, which had flowed down upon it, and then became a hardened mass. See, too, how it has been watered by that last fresh stream of blood mingled with the brain, so that our Saviour's face has become so pitiable an object, that man cannot even picture it to himself! Indeed, we should pity even some brute beast, were we to see it treated thus. Hence our Lord said to the soul, in the Canticle of Canticles: "Open to Me Your heart, My sister, My dove, My bride, and let My bitter Passion touch it; for My Head is full of the dew, and My hair with the dew-drops of the night, that is, of sins; for My Head is damp with blood, and this for Your sins."

Yet not even was all this blood-shedding enough for these cruel dogs, nor all this torture; no, nor even Christ's marvellous patience; none of these was enough to move them to compassion; but their mad hatred was still more inflamed with malice, so that they spat again on Christ's disfigured countenance, which they had so woefully ill-treated, and all the reproach, and contempt, and annoyance, and spurn, and slight, that they could conceive in their devilish hearts, all this they inflicted on this gentle Lamb. They wagged their heads, they gnashed with their teeth against Him in the very madness of their rage, as the prophet said, for they knew not what affliction and pain, or what contempt they could heap upon Him. Their devilish heart was ever desirous of torturing Him more, nor could they satisfy their thirst for His Blood with even torments such as these. Hence, again, they bent their knees to Him in mockery, and adored Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews."

Then, because Christ bore all this with marvelous patience, so as not even once to turn away His face from their blows and spittle, they were stirred up to such fury, that leaping from the ground, and seizing the reed out of His hand, they inflicted horrible blows upon His Head, whereby the points of the thorns were fixed deeper into His sacred brain, so that the pain of this reached even to His Heart, and His precious Blood flowed down abundantly over His dear face and neck. Yet all the while that innocent Lamb sat there full of love, and bore with exceeding patience all this utterly inhuman affliction and pain for our foul sins, for the glory of His Eternal Father. O you proud, you foul sinners, weigh well, I pray, with yourselves, how great must have been your sins, that they had to be atoned for by such a chastisement, and by chastisement so exceeding great. Had not the Eternal Father been grievously offended, never would the Son of God have suffered this way. Had not your sins been clearly unto death, never would the Son of God have died to blot them out. Therefore, let every sinner go down into his own heart, and there, with deep sighs and bitter tears, let him confess and acknowledge that he himself is the cause of these Christ's cruel torments. In truth, as we have sinned, so Christ desired to suffer. It is because men take exceeding pains to adorn their heads in order to appear well-favored before men, and because they take pride in this, that Christ Jesus was so fearfully tortured in His Head, so that He might atone for these sins of men.

He was also in a purple or scarlet robe. Purple is the dye of fishes, which live in the dew of heaven, and it signified tenderness of heart, since this virtue showed a man's blood through all his veins, and gladdeneth and enlightened his heart, and set his spirit on fire with compassion and love. The man who is tender of heart swims in the delights of grace, like a fish in water, and a tender heart lives upon the dew of heaven, that is, on the inflowing of the Holy Ghost. All this, indeed, we can see in Christ. For during the time of His Passion He was young and beautiful, full of all grace and love, for He performed all His works out of a loving, glad, tender, and cheerful heart, to the glory of His Eternal Father; and He shed His precious Blood even to the last little drop, for the salvation of His creatures. And when the Jews could not kill this noble fish on that high and solemn feast-day, the

vestment of His Body was dyed in purple color. Thus, too, in that He was clad in a scarlet robe, that is, in a red garment, twice dyed with the blood of little worms, is shown forth to us His love, which added ornament to all virtues, and this we ought also to have for our chief and upper garment. And His garment was of two colors, and twice dyed, so as to unite us both to God and our neighbor by love, just as fire joined to itself whatever it can burn, and transformed it into its own likeness. Thus, also, everyone who is humble and little in his own eyes, chooses to be as a poor little worm, and burning with love towards his God, stains his robe with scarlet, when for God's glory, and his neighbor's profit and salvation, he wastes his own blood. For the fiery love with which he burns towards God, yearning to promote His highest honor, and to increase His praise, and his ardent desire to lead all men to the highest blessedness, whereby God may be praised by them for all eternity; these, I say, are so great and vehement in such a man, that they inwardly melt and consume him, and cause him to pour himself forth outwardly, so that he embraces all men, especially those who are oppressed by misery or calamity, in such burning love and charity, that he would desire to suffer the torments of hell for all men, if this seemed good to God, and could give Him honor; even as Moses, for the sake of the children of Israel, desired to be blotted out of the book of life, and as Paul desired to become an anathema for his brethren. Thus then did Christ. He humbled Himself in our nature beneath all men whatsoever; He called Himself not a man, but a worm, born of the clay of earth, in that He Himself had taken upon Him human nature, of that goodly earth, the Virgin Mary. Moreover, He took blood and marrow of bone out of love, in order that He might work the highest deeds of love for the glory of God His Father, and the salvation of all mankind. This was why Christ Jesus, the humble lover of souls, wore a bridal garment of purple and scarlet; namely, as a clear proof and sign of His unutterable tenderness and incomprehensible love. And on that day of His espousals, He wore a crown of green, adorned with red roses, that is, crimsoned by His own red Blood, for He would show to us that He is a tender and gentle King, and the true Prince of love.