

DAY 17.

Christ is shown to the people by the Governor, with the words: "Behold the Man!"

AFTER that Jesus had been thus inhumanly treated, and all the poisonous malice of the Jews had been poured out upon Him, yet not even then did their raging madness and hatred wax cold, nor was their thirst of blood quenched. Not satisfied with having shamefully mocked and set to nothing the Son of God in the sight of all who were in the judgment hall, they would have Him led out before the gaze of all the people, who, for fear of pollution, had not dared to enter in; for Pilate was a heathen and profane, and it was not lawful for the Jews to come under his roof. They were afraid of becoming polluted by entering into a heathen man's house, yet they had no fear of calling down Christ's innocent Blood upon themselves. They desired to eat the Paschal Lamb, yet they feared not unjustly to put the true Paschal Lamb to death. Pilate, therefore, brought forth Jesus in His cruel agony, and set Him before the gaze of that raging crowd, saying: "Behold the Man! Behold I lead Him forth to you." See how grievously He has been treated, how fearfully He has been scourged.

Let us now observe, and this with great compassion, how pitiably our Lord stood there, covered with a shameful garment that might well excite their laughter, His crown of thorns upon His Head, His scepter a reed, His Wounds gaping, His limbs worn and wearied, His poor Body horrible to see, trembling with cold, and shedding large drops of blood. Let us look, too, with inward sorrow, on His loving face, on which the angels desire to gaze; how pitiably it is swollen from the cruel blows, how torn and scratched by the finger-nails of His tormentors, how stained and discolored with mingled blood and brain, how foul with spittle, so that He has almost lost the form of man. Oh! surely, he who is not moved by this, is harder than steel and adamant. When, then, Pilate had led Him forth before the people, he said: "Ecce homo!" "Behold the Man!"

This can be interpreted in diverse ways. The Father of heaven has indeed loved us from all eternity, and it is His will that we should give Him love for love, according to our poor measure. This is why He said to the soul of man: “Ecce homo. Behold the man.” Look upon Him, that you may be looked upon by Him; love, that you may be loved; acknowledge Him, that He may acknowledge you. “Behold My only-begotten One bears fullest testimony of My love for you, since I have given Him all for you. Neither His Body, nor His soul, nor His Blood, were so dear to Me, that I could hesitate to give Him for your sake. No, if I could have found in My fatherly Heart anything better or more precious, that would I have given for you. Behold the Man! In the manhood of My Son, I have given you My most high Godhead, for He is one with Me, and in Me, one, same, true and undivided God, and whoever receives Him, receives Me. I have given you, additionally, My Holy Spirit, to cleanse, and comfort, and enlighten you; to teach you all truth and justice; to inflame you with His own love; to solace you, and enrich you with all graces and virtues. For I took exceeding great complacency in you, and you did find favor in My eyes, and I set My Heart upon you, and chose you for My own beloved bride. And from everlasting had I decreed, that My delight and My pleasure should be in you, even in you whom I had chosen to be My temple, and My chamber, and My dwelling-place. Behold the Man! In Him have I given you My whole undivided Self, that you also might give to Me your whole undivided self, all that you are, and all that you can do. With the purest love have I embraced you, without ever looking for any reward or compensation from you. Therefore it is just that you in your turn should love Me without looking for any reward; that is, that you should love Me for Myself alone, that I may be your reward, your hope, and your aim, and that you should love Me, because I have loved you, and that you may deserve to be loved by Me. And if you will enter with Me into a compact of love, and become worthy to be loved by Me, you must be a willing and living instrument in My hands, and allow yourself to be led by Me; and you must offer and resign your whole self wholly to Me, without any wish or choice of your own, and suffer whatever may seem good to Me to do with you both in time and in eternity. Yes, I say, it is thus absolutely necessary that

you should leave Me to work in you, and leave yourself to suffer, and to forego, and that you should ask of Me to accomplish in you all that from everlasting I have decreed and fore-ordained, denying yourself utterly, and giving Me all power to work in you. And with entire trust in My goodness, you must cling to Me, receiving with great gratitude from My hand all that I shall permit to happen to you, both adversity and prosperity, temptations, afflictions, abandonment, distress; trusting that in My lovingkindness I send you these things, as being the best, and most healthful, and useful for you, and in these must you exercise yourself. But if you are stable in yourself, and persevere, and look into the depths of your soul, you will clearly see why I have allowed these things to happen to you, and that they are most necessary for you, and for your own interest. But, above all, I wish you to take care, lest you resist My workings within you by obstinacy, self-seeking, wandering thoughts, negligence and dissipation. But in whatever affliction, distress or abandonment, I may allow to come upon you, you shall desire to persevere in just as long as shall seem good to Me, until I loosen and snatch you from there, and set you free; and you shall bear that cross even unto the end for My sake. It necessary for you, indeed, to be thus shaken and tossed by temptations and troubles, until every straw of lust, or selfishness, or vicious propensity be -blown away from you, and your soul, which is so proud and stiff, must be ground by these things as if by a mill-stone, until you, in your own eyes, are brought down to nothing, like dust and ashes, so as not only to acknowledge, but to feel that you are the most wretched and vilest of all whom the world contains. And you must be so stripped of all will and choice of your own, that whatever God shall do with you and with all creatures, may be so pleasing to you, that you may not even desire it to be otherwise, even if all creatures and all the elements were subject to your rule. But before this state can be reached, there is work for you to do, and toil for you to bear; and to obtain all this many will be the crosses and labors, yes, and spiritual deaths, which you will have to undergo. For before it can bring forth the fruit, the grain of wheat must die in the earth. Truly, these are the two wings; exceeding trust-worthy, which summarily and swiftly lift us to the spiritual life; that is to say, self denial and patient suffering of adversity; in two words, self-denial and suffering. For whoever knows how to resign himself to God in all simplicity,

to him no affliction, nor infirmity, nor adversity can happen at all, without turning to an increase of virtue. This is that to which the apostle bore witness, when he said: “We know that to them who love God all things work together for good.”

Therefore, if a man bears all things equally, and from all that happens to him gather matter for self-exercise, and if he carefully looks into the depth of his own heart, he will hear the Father’s voice speaking to him inwardly, and saying: “Ecce homo!” “Behold the Man!” Know yourself, know what you are; acknowledge your too great want of mortification, and the manifold vices that lie hidden in the depth of your soul; take good heed that you are nothing, that you have nothing, that you can do nothing of yourself. Allow Me, then, to work within you. Cleave unto Me by love, serve Me by faith, and whatever you can not do by your own power I will do it for you. In this knowledge, therefore, such a man will exercise himself, and when all his defects and crosses have been taken away, he will go with them to God, and give Him thanks, for thus having caused him to know his own vileness; and he will answer God, and will say in his turn, “Ecce homo!” Behold the man!” Behold, O my God, I am wretched and fit for nothing, and weak, and powerless; I have been conceived in sin, born in misery, and brought up in vice. Against whom, O Lord, do you put forth your power? “Ecce homo!” “Behold the man.” Be not angry with the leaf that is carried away by the wind. Forget not, O tender Lord, my poverty and frailty, and take not away from me the help of your grace, for I am a man, and a frail broken vessel; I am a worm, and no man, full of the uncleanness of the flesh, from which filth and dirt run down both within and without. The power of resistance has gone from me, and already I am overcome. Have mercy on me, O you, my God! Fight for me, work in me, do unto me what you will. Behold! I resign my whole self to you. For I know that your nature is goodness, and that it belongs to you to have mercy and to spare. All my malice I cast into your infinite goodness. you have granted unto me to know my sins, O Lord, grant that I may overcome them. Tear up by the roots all uncleanness of sin, and whatever is displeasing to you, and again plant in me your divine love, and all virtues.

Lastly, by this acknowledgment of his own frailty, and by the contemplation of his own vices, a man will very often make greater progress, if he only exercises himself well therein, than if in the meanwhile he had exercised himself in other things, however high. In truth, if a man is to be thoroughly cleansed, the vices which lie hidden in him must be brought to light, and he himself must sit with holy Job on the dung-hill and filth of his own vices, and this, too, with much sorrow and anguish, scraping off the gore and unclean matter of his wounds with a pottery fragment; that is to say, wiping away with labor and pain the impure flux of thoughts that spring from his sensual and corrupt nature. And he must place his exercise in this, so that with grievous toil he may cultivate the field of his conscience, if one day he would have it yield pleasant fruit. Now he must exercise himself in these things for a while, and many times must he die to these vices, and conquer them, and go with them to God, and throw all his sins and faults many times into God's Wounds, and wash them therein, and burn them away in the flame of God's love, until he feels that they have gone utterly from him, and that he has been freed from them by God.

Moreover, this word, "Ecce homo," may be taken in this sense, as if, namely, the Son Himself were to say: "Ecce homo:" "Behold, O man." Behold what I have done for you; I have known you from everlasting in My essence, for from everlasting you have been in Me, sharing My being according to the idea of My Eternal Mind. Besides, I made you a creature, and embraced you with such high love, and endowed you with such excellent grace, that I created you to My own image and likeness. And that you might know how goodly and fair I made you, I shrunk not, from taking your nature, and from stamping on it the image of My worshipful Godhead. I was made, your own flesh and blood that I might redeem you. I created My soul with all its powers, and I filled it with all spiritual gifts and graces, that I might perfectly practice all virtues, that I might satisfy for your sins, and that I might merit and obtain for you life everlasting. "Ecce homo." I, Who before all ages was born of the

divine womb of My Eternal Father, in a certain marvelous and unutterable way, ever abiding equal with the same Father in power and glory, thought it no lowering of Myself to take your nature, and to be made your servant for three and thirty years, and in much poverty and lowliness and affliction, to work your salvation. I was made, too, an exile from Mine own kingdom, that you might become its heir. I was made an enemy of My Father, and was forsaken and chastened by Him with cruel chastisement, and I suffered His anger to be cast on Me, that you might find grace, and be made the friend and child of God. Lastly, I took all your debt upon Me, and I, Who was your Judge, and Who by right could have sentenced you to eternal damnation, was so touched with mercy, that under the appearance of a guilty sinner I gladly gave Myself over to a shameful death for your sins, and spent My whole Self even to the last little drop of blood. Moreover, out of pure love, I gave you My very Heart's Blood to drink: I became a worm, and no man, mocked and scoffed at by all, the reproach of men, and the hated sickening outcast of the people. As the fruit of the vine was I pressed in the wine-press of My Passion. My strength withered up like a broken pottery, and was dried by the fire of love; and even as snow melts when the sun looks down, so in My Father's sight was I exhausted, and consumed, and melted for the sake of your salvation. "Ecce homo." "Behold the Man!" What more should I do for you? How could I have shown you greater faithfulness, greater good-will, greater loving-kindness? See, how I stand here disfigured for your sins; how I, the Lord of lords, am forsaken from on high, and from below, and despised by all. See how the torment of those thorns has pressed into the marrow of My Heart, that I may pick out the thorns and sharp points of your sins. From the top of My Head to the sole of My feet, I am but one gaping, bleeding Wound, that I may perfectly heal you of every hurt. All the evil that you have deserved by following the desires of your nature, all that I have washed away in such great and sharp bitterness of pain; and I have so cleansed you wholly from every stain of sin in My precious Blood, that you might become pleasing and acceptable in My sight. "Ecce homo:" "Behold the Man." Keep forever in your mind the remembrance of this love, and with what zeal, labour, and sorrow, I sought after you, and be not after

this a stranger to Me. See if there can be any sorrow that can be compared with My sorrow! See if ever any guilty wretch suffered such pain for his own sins, as I have suffered for yours!

From these words, too, the Holy Church, our Mother, has deemed that the Sacred Host should be elevated and shown to all, as if to speak to us, and say: “Ecce homo!” “Behold the Man;” in order to stir us up, the good Mother that she is, to bear ever in mind the Incarnation, Nativity, Passion, Death, and Resurrection, and, in a word, all the love and all the benefits shown and conferred upon us by Christ; for the Holy Thing, that is the Mass, has been instituted in remembrance of God’s love, and of the works which for our sakes He has accomplished. For the same reason it has been decreed, that there should be placed in all the churches the mirror of truth, that is, the image of the Holy Cross of Christ Jesus; so that as often as he crosses the threshold of the temple, man may contemplate the figure of his Maker hanging upon the Cross; and that straightaway there may come into his mind that wonderful love, which his God then declared to him; and that he may so exercise and occupy himself therein, as to forget all strange and outward images, and may imagine that his crucified Lord is addressing him in these words: “Ecce homo:” “Behold the man.” Behold how I hang here, despised, mocked, wracked, fastened with nails, wounded, deprived of all comfort, My arms naked and stretched out towards you, to take you back into My grace. Behold how I hang here, with My Head bowed down, that I may give you the kiss of peace and reconciliation; with My side and Heart open, that I may bring you, My chosen bride, into the pleasant chamber of My Heart, and there embrace you with love everlasting. Then man, in his turn, as if accepting Christ’s loving invitation to approach His sweet Wounds, turns himself, full of confidence, to God, and to Christ’s nailed and pierced feet, and throwing himself down with as lowly submission as he can, thinks how he himself has inflicted, by his foul sins, all this bitter sorrow on his Lord and God, and at the same time confesses all his sins with bitter sorrow and burning tears, saying: “Enter not now, O most merciful God, into judgment with your useless and sinful servant, for in your sight shall no man living be justified.” If in your angels evil was found, how much more unclean will man be, who was conceived in concupiscence,

and born in sin? Lord, correct me not in your anger, for I am not spirit, but flesh; not an angel, but a man. “Behold the Man.” What is man, Lord God, that your anger should rage against him, whose life is like the wind or the smoke, which quickly passes away? Why did you show your power against the leaf, which is carried away by the wind? Then, too, at the same time, with all his weakness and all his sins, man turned to God, and said: “I know, O God of mercies, that you made me pure and exceedingly fit for no other end than that I might serve you, love you, praise and give you thanks, and that I might be an obedient instrument in all things, whereby you might work according to the desire of your Heart, in all delight and without hindrance. But alas! I have been corrupted and made foul by sin; I have utterly destroyed your noble instrument, and rendered it unfit for use, so that I am unworthy that you should work in me at all. For by sin I have been made wholly useless, and corrupt, and hateful; nor do I know if I deserve anything else, that you should take away from me all your grace, and cast me off from your face. But, O most merciful God! while I thus wait for your tender long-suffering, and your long-suffering tenderness, where you have borne so patiently all the wrong, and contempt, and shame that I have inflicted on you, I here call to mind that it is not your will that any man should perish, and that you desires not the death of the wicked, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness, and live. Trusting then to this, I turn to you.

“O sweet Lord Jesus Christ, Who, by the will of the Father, and the cooperation of the Holy Ghost, renewed our too corrupted nature, and restore it to its first purity, so that by you far greater grace and glory have been born to us, that we lost by our first parents: Behold, I desire to offer myself as an instrument in your hands, whereby you may work in me according to the desire of your Heart, as no creature has ever offered itself before. But, O tender God, this is not in my power, for by a long habit of sin I have utterly corrupted myself. But whatever I may now be, I offer myself to you. If you have renewed the whole world by yourself, surely you are able to form me again to that purity, in which I was created by you. You are able out of a stone to raise up a child of Abraham. Grant me, therefore,

by your divine Mystery, to form and make over again all that by my own wickedness I have destroyed.”

Thirdly, the word “Ecce homo” may be literally understood, as if Pilate, when he said to the Jewish multitude: “Ecce homo,” “Behold the man,” meant to address them in these words: “Behold the man.—Now let your blood-thirstiness be quenched, let this now be enough for you; cease now to persecute any more the innocent blood. For, contrary to right and justice, contrary to my mind and conscience, I have fearfully chastised this innocent man, in order to appease your mad rage. Let this be enough for you, and now show some kindness to this man, who has deserved no evil. For he is a man. Have compassion on your own flesh and blood, and on one of your own race; let your cruel tyranny be turned into mercy, your hatred into love; have pity upon Him in His cruel punishments, which you see have been inflicted upon Him. He is no beast, but a man. No robber or criminal was ever so brought down to nothing, or so unworthily punished for his crimes, as this Just Man, Who has done no wrong. If you despised Him because He said He was a king, now, at least, receive Him Whom you see the most wretched and abject of men.”

When, then, the cruel Jews heard these words, and saw Jesus disfigured standing before them, their hearts of steel, far from being softened, began rather to glow with a white heat of hatred and envy, so that they cried out savagely: “Away with Him, away with Him!” “We cannot even look upon Him!” “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” “We will have no more excuses: He is guilty of death.” When Pilate saw that he could do no good, and that he was powerless either by word or deed to set Jesus free, and that the rage and madness of the Jews increased more and more, he washed his hands before all the wicked people, and said: “I am guiltless of the innocent blood of this Just Man. See you to it.” But they with discordant and horrible cries, cried out: “His Blood be upon us, and upon our children.” O unheard of malice! O accursed hatred!

Here let each man enter into the secret places of his heart, and there meditate with himself with what sorrow the Heart of Jesus was pierced at these words, since He clearly saw that they had been uttered by the Jews out of envy and malice. Let us consider how heavy an affliction it was to our tender-hearted Lord, Whose nature is goodness, when He looked into the deceitful and plague-stricken hearts of His people, and beheld with what cruelty and hatred they were consumed, how they thirsted for His Blood, so as even to give themselves and their children over to eternal condemnation, and the terrible vengeance of God, if only they could put Christ to death. How sadly, probably, did our Lord think within His Heart: “O My people, what have I done to you, or how have I grieved you? I chose you from out of the nations, and highly exalted you. With fatherly love I kept and cherished you, and I filled you with all good things, and now you seek to kill and crucify Me.”

After this, Pilate passed sentence upon Christ, and gave Him into the hands of the Jews, that they might crucify Him, and put Him to death according to their desire. Ah! where is the man whose heart will not tremble with horror, and who will not break forth into tears, when he sees the Author of life sentenced to death? The Son of God, to Whom the Father has given all judgment, suffering Himself, of His own free will, to be condemned to a shameful death? Oh! who can refrain from tears, when he calls to mind how his dear Lord, the innocent Lamb, was delivered into the cruel hands of the Jews, that they might fulfill their designs upon Him? What will they now do, when they have obtained the judge’s consent, who dared to do so much without the governor’s leave? Will they not pour out upon Christ the rage which they have so long borne in their hearts? In truth, whatever evil they could think of, that they inflicted upon Him. By the most bitter, shameful, cruel and contemptible death they can think of, will they kill Him; for He has given Himself over to their will. O wicked judgment! O unjust sentence! O cruel condemnation! O perverse judge, a little while ago you did find no cause in Him, and now you sentenced Him to death. A little before you did declare Him a just man, and now

you condemned Him to die. A little before you did confess that you knew well that the Jews had been moved by hatred and envy to deliver Him to you, and that there was no fault at all in Him, and now you gave Him over into the hands of His enemies, and to their cruel will!