

DAY 15.

Jesus is fearfully Scourged.

FROM this the lictors and guards of the governor, mad with rage, took Christ, and savagely stripping Him of His garments, who is the maker of heaven and of all creatures, and who hide the heaven with clouds, and give being to all, shamelessly left Him naked before all the people. There He stood, the fairest and most beautiful of men, clad only in His virgin shame and simple innocence. Oh, what a cross was this to His most pure heart, to be compelled to stand so shamefully in His nakedness before those vile wretches; for the more a man has true virtue, so much the more full is he of the shame of innocence. Then they bound Him so mercilessly to the pillar, that, as we read, His flesh hid altogether the cords by which He was bound, such was the tenderness and delicacy of His nature. Moreover, we find it written, that He was so cruelly bound, that the blood burst forth from His finger-nails. And this they did lest He should slip out of their hands, for they held Him to be a criminal and an impostor. After this these cruel wild beasts, like savage lions, inhumanly tore Christ's fair and holy body; for they so scourged it, and plowed it up with wounds, and mangled it with rods and all the other terrible scourges they could think of in their envious hearts, that He became wholly unlike Himself, His body being all covered with His blood, and with gaping wounds.

Nor was it only His skin that they tore with rods, but they mangled His sacred flesh by inhuman tortures, and so tore it to pieces, that all His body seemed to be left without skin, as those evil-minded ones added wound to wound, and pain to pain, and woe to woe. And when they had so cruelly torn one of His sides, so that nothing could be seen but blood and wounds, as certain doctors affirm, they loosed Him, and then bound Him again with His back to the pillar, His hands at the same time being fastened above His head. After this, they wounded by repeated scourging His sacred belly, which, as

it had touched the pillar during the first scourging, but was not so grievously hurt, and they tore it in like manner as they had torn His back. And the men who did this, perhaps were fresh torturers. There were four of them, we read, and they vomited their cruelty upon Him, not less than the first had done, We may gather this, and prove it from those words of the prophet: “From the sole of His foot to the top of His head, there is no health in Him.”

Meanwhile, let us think what His torment must have been during all this, when they tore out the cords which had eaten into His flesh, and then again forced them back into His flesh, and inhumanly struck and wounded Him afresh. St Bonaventure said that Christ here received more than five thousand wounds. In truth, He was so disfigured and pitiable a sight, that not only His torturers were wearied with striking, but men were also wearied with looking at Him. Nevertheless, our gracious Savior stood there full of kindness and burning love, patiently suffering all this affliction and punishment for our sins, and with exceeding great desire offering His fair and ruddy Body as a loving sacrifice to His Father in heaven. For never did He suffer so much for our salvation, as not to desire to suffer more for His Father’s glory, and to testify to us the incomprehensible love of His Heart, and to make it known as clearly as He could in every deed. Nothing sound or whole was left in His Body, and still all the while His desire of suffering yet greater things remained in Him whole and without distraction. The torturers’ scourges had torn His whole Body, yet in His patience love kept His Heart untouched. The torturers had grown weary of scourging Him, yet Christ was not weary of desiring to suffer. His Blood, so precious to sinners, flowed down in large streams upon the earth, and His Spirit, in gratitude, was lifted up to His Father in heaven. His sacred Body lay under the scourges of sin, and the prayers of His Heart were carried by the angels to His Father in the heavenly places. His Flesh streamed down with Blood, and His Blood itself flowed down, but His groans and fiery desires, whereby He offered all this affliction to His Father for the sins of all mankind, went up on high. On every side He poured Himself out upon men, but with His whole strength, and with full and your reverence and praise, He stretched Himself upwards to the high presence of His Father in heaven.

Below poor man, sick and ill, drank in the medicine of life; and above, the Father rejoiced in the patience of His Son. Man received that by which he will be saved forever, and God the Father that by which He will be praised through all eternity. The Son of God was wounded in His Body, that the souls of men might recover salvation. From all His limbs there flowed forth Blood, that He might pour the same, as a health-giving balm, into our wounds. The grape-cluster was hung on the staff, that He might make us certain and sure of the land of promise. The cluster was pressed in the wine-press, that He might make us drunken with His love. The bowl was broken into pieces, so that the oil of mercy might begin to flow out. He dyed the tunic of His Body in purple, that as our Bridegroom of singular beauty, He might provoke us to love Him. Grievously did He suffer in His Body, and sorely was He afflicted, that He might make us glad in spirit. He was forsaken of His Father, that we might be taken back into His Father's grace. His body was damp with His warm Blood, that He might prepare for us a bath, wherein we might be thoroughly washed and cleansed from every stain of sin. His warm Blood boiled over from His sacred Body, that He might cause our cold and hardened hearts to melt in His love. Like water He was poured out, that our spirit might swim in the delights of His grace. Nothing in His whole Body remained whole, that nothing hurtful, nothing foul, nothing that was not whole, might remain in our souls. And although on all sides He was so stricken by more than human suffering, that by reason of the excellence and tenderness of His nature and complexion, every blow pierced His Heart; nevertheless, His will was so subject both to God and men, and His burning desire to accomplish to the full all that His Father required of Him, and to redeem man, was so great in Him beyond all measure; in a word, He was so taken prisoner by love, that He could utter no complaint. For He could do nothing but love, and suffer for love.

O my soul! and as many as love God, who have been redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ Jesus, and washed from your sins, come and see, with inward grief, all that God suffered for our sins, all that He underwent for our iniquities. And if this does not bring compunction to your hearts, nor move them, then account yourselves harder than steel or stone. See how the King of glory was here

wounded and disfigured for your crimes. What more do you require of Him? If this is not enough, He is ready to suffer even more. Do you think that there remained in His Body anything unhurt or sound? Behold! He will gladly accept even death for your sins, and will suffer His Blood to be shed to the very last little drop. Yes! He will let His Heart be pierced for your sakes, that He may throw it open to you, and make known His exceeding love. Oh! who can ever find us forgetful of His measureless love? Marvelous indeed it is, that our hearts are not melted at this most burning love! How can we ever cease from praising Him and giving Him thanks, or who can busy himself with any other care, than to return in some poor little way love for love? Why is it hard for us to taste some little drop of myrrh for His sake, Who suffered Himself to be swallowed up whole in a very sea of suffering for our sake? Or how can it be ever a grievous thing for us to bear in mind His Passion, which it was not grievous for Him to undergo? O sweet Jesus, what tenderness have overcome Your Heart, what love have swallowed it up, that You were willing to suffer so bitter and dishonorable a Passion for us wretched sinners? Why did You not spare Yourself altogether, when it would have been enough indeed, so excellent and of such exceeding worth was Your Passion, to have shed one little drop of Your precious Blood? Why did You cast Yourself so utterly away, and expose Yourself, and suffer Yourself in such a humble way to be brought down to nothing? O loving Jesus, You wished to show forth Your out-flowing and utterly measureless love for us, with which, from the beginning, You have loved us. This is why You gave Yourself wholly for us, that in our turn we might give ourselves wholly to You, and love You back again with our whole strength and all our power.

O Almighty Father, who am I, a poor vile man and worthless sinner, that You, for my sake, should not spare even Your Only-Begotten One? How precious, how dear was my soul in Your eyes, for which You gave so noble a pledge, and which You have redeemed by so precious a treasure? How have You loved me from everlasting, that You would rather that Your Son should be wounded, and wearied, and afflicted, and tortured, and the last spark of His human life put out, than that I should

perish? And how could Your fatherly Heart suffer, O gracious Father, to see Your beloved Son, God co-eternal and co-equal with You, overwhelmed by such more than mortal torments, a spectacle of woe even to His enemies? You came to the help of all who are afflicted and oppressed, You have pity on thieves and robbers, lending them aid even when they suffer for their sins and trespasses; why then were You not by the side of the Son of Your love? Why did You not comfort Him in His sore distress? Why did You forsake Him, O Father of mercies? Why were not the deepest part of Your fatherly compassion moved for the grievous and intolerable affliction of Your only-begotten One? Why did You not withdraw Him from the hands of the Jews? Why did You not temper His sorrow by pouring sweetness into His Heart, as You have done to Your holy martyrs in their agony? Truly, O most merciful Father, You have done this in Your divine justice, and wisdom, and goodness, that the resignation and patience of Your beloved Son might be shown forth more clearly in our eyes, that the power and merit of His Passion might not be lessened, that the salvation of mankind might be vigorously, mightily, and perfectly accomplished, and that, lastly, the debt of the human race might be paid in lavish abundance. It was because You would show forth Your burning love towards us, that You did not spare the very last little drop of the Blood of Your beloved Son.

Clearly, had not Christ's Death and Passion been enough to save man, both the Father of heaven and the Holy Ghost would also have taken on them our human nature, and died for man, rather than have suffered him to perish. Moreover, although the Son alone became man, and suffered a bitter death for man, yet the love and tenderness of the Father and the Holy Ghost were not the less shown forth in our regard, for in the Trinity of Persons there is one essence, one love, one operation common to all, one and the same will. The adorable and most holy Trinity took counsel together concerning the redemption of the human race, and agreed together in decreeing that man should be redeemed; and because for none of the Three Persons was it so fitting to take our human nature, as for the Son, therefore both by His own free will, and by the will of the Father, and by the persuasion of the Holy Ghost, He came upon earth; He Who was the Almighty Creator, became man, was made a creature,

by the cooperation both of the Father and of the Holy Ghost. For Christ was conceived of the Holy Ghost by the cooperation of the Father. He said Himself: "I work nothing of Myself; but My Father, Who abides in Me, He it is Who does the works." Now that the love of the Son towards us is the same as that of the Father, and of the Holy Ghost, is clearly enough shown to us by the Father, from the very fact that He delivered His own Son to death for our sakes; and Christ Himself bore witness to this, when He said: "For the Father also loves you." And of the Holy Ghost the Apostle said: And the Spirit Himself asks for us with groanings that cannot be uttered;" that is, inspires, moves, and excites us to pray, and to give ourselves to virtue. And the Spirit bears witness to our spirit, that we are the sons of God, so that, in the joy of this inward witness we may cry in the same spirit, "Abba, Father!" But what can be more blessed and delightful in this valley of tears, than for man, out of the testimony of the Holy Ghost in his own conscience, to call God his Father? For if we are sons, then are we Christ's brethren, and joint-heirs with Him.

See then, O my soul! what care the Adorable Trinity have taken of You. Behold, how from everlasting God has loved You! Consider this, I pray, O you cold and hard-hearted children of Adam! 'Think at how dear a price He has bought you. The noblest gift that God's Heart could conceive, the mightiest offering that God's power could give, this He has offered for you, indeed, daily offering in the adorable Sacrament. And as of old the Father of Heaven spared not His only-begotten Son, but offered Him to death, and that the most shameful death of the cross, for the sins of men; so even now there is not a moment, when He does not in like manner offer Him for our sins in the most noble Sacrament of the Eucharist. And as Christ was made obedient unto the Father, even unto death, so today, and until the last day, He is obedient, not only to God the Father, but to all who, with faithful hearts, and longing desires, love God, and cleave to Him. But because there was no need that He should again suffer death, since His sacred death reaches unto all sins that have ever been committed, or shall still be committed; nevertheless He ceases not to offer daily His Sacred Body, and His noble soul, and His precious Blood, together with all the merits of His Life and Passion, in the worshipful

Sacrament of the Altar, for the remission of our sins, and in memory of His Passion and Death. In truth, He teaches us by this, that, were it necessary, He is still ready today to give His worshipful Body and Blood over to death, for the sake of our salvation. For the same love which Christ then had for us, still endures in Him, and will endure forever.

Where then, I ask, is there such a heart of stone, as not to be moved to compunction at all this? Where is the spirit that will not rejoice at love such as this? Where is the heart that will not wholly melt away in the heat of this burning clarity? Where is the man whose understanding will not faint, for exceeding wonder, when he contemplates God's measureless love and goodness towards us, when he perceives with the eyes of his heart, and searches the recesses of his conscience, or weighs in the balance the mighty benefits which God has conferred, and daily confers upon us poor wretched men; for truly they are so great, that greater can hardly be? See how Christ's gracious arms are stretched out to receive us! And His wounds are ever open, ready to pour forth upon all whatever they desire. The banners of His mercy are ever unfolded, so that we may take shelter and lie hidden beneath them, for He is ever ready to receive us. More than this, He loves us so very much, that by divine drawings, and inspirations, and inward warnings, He asks for us more than we ask for ourselves, for He is indeed far more ready to give than we to pray.

What need of multiplying words? Truly, it is no small sorrow to Him, that His wounds are dried up, and can no longer bleed down mercy upon us, since very few there are, alas! who desire this with their whole hearts. Therefore, beyond doubt, He will one day prove Himself a stern judge to those who now neglect His loving-kindness and mercy, since He burned with such love for man, that He confessed that His delights are to be with the children of men. If, then, with hearts ready, we would allow Him to accomplish His work and His will within us, beyond all doubt, in His exceeding goodness, He would Himself with all His gifts flow down upon us. For God is a well of living water,

ever leaping up, never ceasing to flow, save when vessels are wanting to receive it. And by one link of love does He Himself eagerly desire to be united to man, and to build up within us His own delightful dwelling-place and longed-for temple. Indeed, He longs to be united to man by love, with an exceeding great longing, just as if He had utterly forgotten His power and majesty, and only cared to be made like to man in all things. And how could He have raised us higher, and cast Himself down lower than He has done? How could He have united us unto His Godhead more closely than He has actually united us, when He linked together His most high and immortal nature with our mortal humanity, by taking on Him our nature? Nor is this all, for day by day, He also gives His most high Godhead, and all that He is, to be our food. How, then, could He have joined Himself to us in a more inward manner, than by His desire to become our food? For nothing is so closely bound up with a man as the food which passes into his substance.

Moreover, God the Father has also bestowed something more upon us, when He raised up our human nature in Christ as high as it could be raised, and by lifting it high above all creatures to His own Right Hand, so that our nature, which of old had been cursed, and sentenced to damnation, now became blessed, and holy, and wonderfully exalted above all the blessed; and what had formerly been the laughing-stock of the demons in hell, is now adored by the angels in heaven. How, then, could God have treated us with greater honor and glory, or shown us more overflowing love? Truly, we have obtained, through Christ our Lord and Saviour, far richer salvation and glory than we lost through Adam, our first father. What more can we desire from our sweet Lord? To every man, above all to him who cleaves unto and loves Him with his whole heart, He is as greatly and closely attached, as if He had forgotten the heavens and the earth, and all that in them is, and had wholly perished for the very love of him. This is why the loving soul cries out in the Cantic of Canticles: "My Beloved to me, and I to Him." And so great and measureless is God's love towards the soul of man, that He seems to love none else but him. Yet not even by all these kindness and acts of love can God draw us to Himself, or move us, or inflame us with His love; so infected are our hearts with

sensual love, and painted over with the likeness of created things, and so given up to temporal goods and to the cares of this world, so greatly also do they pant after honors, and desire to obey and satisfy their nature in its search after pleasure. By these and such other like things, we are so held and hindered, that there lies open to us no approach to God by love. Indeed! the heavens and the earth weep for this, because men have fallen so low, that they have left their Creator to love the creature; that they have forsaken the highest and ultimate good, which is God Himself, to lovingly embrace the earth, and the slime of earth; that they would rather be the slaves of demons, than the sons of God, that they would rather be friends of the world, than lovers of Christ; that, in a word, it is a more pleasant thing for them to be a nest of unclean spirits, than the temple of the Holy Ghost. Ah! ah! let us love Him, I beseech of you, who has embraced us with such measureless love, and on the other hand, by every means in our power, let us despise him, together with all his counsels and suggestions, who is the relentless murderer of souls, and who is wholly bent upon leading us with him to the place of torment everlasting.