

The Eighteenth Hour

From 10 to 11 AM

Jesus takes up the Cross and walks toward Calvary, where He is stripped

My Jesus, insatiable Love, I see that You give Yourself no peace, I feel your fidgets of love, your pains. Your Heart beats strongly; in every heartbeat I feel bursts, tortures, violences of love; and unable to contain the fire that devours You, You pant, moan, sigh, and in each moan I hear You say: "Cross!" Each drop of your Blood repeats: "Cross!" All your pains, through which You swim as though in an interminable sea, repeat among themselves: "Cross!" And You exclaim: "O Cross, beloved and longed for, You alone will save my children, and I concentrate in You all my love!"

Second Crowning with Thorns.

Meanwhile, your enemies take You back into the Praetorium, and remove the purple mantle, wanting to clothe You again with your own garments. But, alas, how much pain! It would be sweeter for me to die than to see You suffer so much! The garment remains snagged to the crown, and they are unable to pull it off. So, with cruelty never before seen, they tear off everything together – garment and crown. At the cruel tearing, many thorns break, remaining stuck inside your most holy head. Blood pours down in torrents, and your pain is such that You moan. But the enemies, heedless of the tortures, clothe You with your own garment, and then put the crown back, pushing it violently upon your head. The thorns are driven into your eyes, into your ears – there is not one part of your most holy head that does not feel their piercing. Your pain is such that You stagger under those cruel hands, shivering from head to foot; You are about to die among atrocious spasms of pain, and with your languishing eyes, filled with blood, You look at Me, with difficulty, asking for help in so much pain!

My Jesus, King of Sorrows, let me sustain You and hold You tightly to my heart. I would want to take the fire that devours You to burn your enemies to ashes and rescue You; but You don't want it, because your yearnings for the Cross become more ardent, and You quickly want to immolate Yourself on It - also for your enemies! But as I hold You tightly to my heart, You, holding me tightly to Yours, tell me: "My child, let Me pour out my love; and together with Me, repair for those who do good and yet dishonor Me. These Jews clothe Me with my own garment in order to discredit Me even more before the people, to convince them that I am a criminal. In appearance, the action of clothing Me was good, but in its essence it was evil. Ah, how many do good works, administer Sacraments or attend them, with human, and even evil purposes. But good, done badly, leads to hardness; so I want to be crowned for the second time, with pains sharper than the first time, in order to shatter this hardness, and with my thorns, draw them to Myself. Ah, my child, this second crowning is much more painful. I feel my head swimming in the midst of thorns; at every movement I make, or blow they give to Me, I suffer many cruel deaths. In this way I repair for the malice of the offenses; I repair for those, who, in whatever interior state they find themselves, instead of thinking of their own sanctification, waste and reject my grace, giving Me back more piercing thorns; while I am forced to moan, to cry tears of blood, and to sigh for their salvation.

Ah, I do everything to love them, and the creatures do everything to offend Me! You, at least - do not leave Me alone in my pains and reparations."

Jesus embraces the Cross.

My tortured Good, with You I repair, with You I suffer. But I see that your enemies hurl You down the stairs; the people await You with fury and eagerness; they make You find the Cross ready, which You long for with many sighs. And You - with love You gaze on It, and with firm step You approach It and embrace It. But, before that, You kiss It, and as a shiver of joy runs through your Most Holy Humanity, with highest contentment You gaze on It again, measuring Its length and breadth. In It, already, You establish the portion for each creature. You dower them all, enough to bind them to the Divinity with a bond of marriage, and make them heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven. Then, unable to contain the love with which You love them, You kiss the Cross again, and say: "Adored Cross, finally I embrace you. You were the longing of my Heart, the martyrdom of my love. But you, O Cross, have delayed until now, while my steps were always toward you. Holy Cross, you were the goal of my desires, the purpose of my existence down here. In you I concentrate my whole being, in you I place all my children, and you will be their life, their light, defense, custody and strength. You will assist them in everything, and will bring them gloriously to Me in Heaven. Oh Cross, Pulpit of Wisdom, you alone will teach true sanctity; you alone will form the heroes, the athletes, the martyrs, the Saints. Beautiful Cross, you are my Throne, and since I have to leave the earth, you will remain in my place. To you I give all souls as dowry - keep them, save them; I entrust them to you!"

In saying this, eager, You let It be placed upon your most holy shoulders. Ah, my Jesus, the Cross is too light for your love, but the weight of our sins unites to that of the Cross - enormous and immense, as the expanse of the Heavens. And You, my wearied Good, You feel crushed under the weight of so many sins. Your soul is horrified at their sight, and feels the pain of each sin. Your Sanctity remains shaken before so much ugliness, and as the Cross weighs upon your shoulders, You stagger, You pant, and a mortal sweat creeps through your Most Holy Humanity. O please, my Love, I don't have the heart to leave You alone - I want to share the weight of the cross with You; and to relieve You from the weight of sins, I cling to your feet. I want to give You, in the name of all creatures, love for those who do not love You, praises for those who despise You, blessings, thanksgivings, obedience on behalf of all. I promise that in any offense You receive, I intend to offer You all of myself in reparation, to do the acts opposite to the offenses the creatures give You, and to console You with my kisses and continuous acts of love. But I see that I am too miserable; I need You to be able to really repair You. Therefore I unite myself to your Most Holy Humanity, and together with You I unite my thoughts to yours in order to repair for the evil thoughts - mine, and of all; my eyes to yours, to repair for the evil glances; my mouth to yours, to repair for the blasphemies and the evil discourses; my heart to yours, to repair for the evil tendencies, desires and affections. In a word, I want to repair everything that your Most Holy Humanity repairs, uniting myself to the immensity of your Love for all, and to the immense good You do to all. But I am not yet content. I want to unite myself to your Divinity, and I dissolve my nothingness in It, and in this way I give You everything. I give You your Love to quench your bitternesses; I give You your Heart to relieve You from our coldness, lack of correspondence, ingratitude, and the little love of the creatures. I give You your Harmonies to cheer your hearing from the deafening blasphemies it receives. I give You your Beauty to relieve You from the ugliness of our souls, when we muddy ourselves in sin. I give You your Purity to relieve You from the lack of righteous intention, and from the mud and rot You see in many souls. I give You your Immensity to relieve You from the voluntary constraints into which souls put themselves. I give You your Ardor to burn all sins and all hearts, so that all may love You, and no one may offend You, ever again. In sum, I give You all that You are, to give You infinite satisfaction, eternal, immense and infinite love.

The Painful Way to Calvary.

My most patient Jesus, I see You take the first steps under the enormous weight of the Cross. I unite my steps to yours, and when You, weak, bled dry and staggering, are about to fall, I will be at your side to sustain You; I will place my shoulders beneath It, so as to share Its weight with You. Do not disdain me, but accept me as your faithful companion. Oh Jesus, You look at me, and I see that You repair for those who do not carry their crosses with resignation, but rather, they swear, get irritated, commit suicide, and commit murders. And for all You impetrate love and resignation to their crosses. But your pain is such that You feel crushed under the Cross. You have taken only the first steps, and You already fall under It. As You fall, You knock against the stones; the thorns are driven more into your head, while all your wounds are embittered, and pour out new Blood. And since You do not have the strength to get up, your enemies, irritated, try to make You stand with kicks and shoves.

My fallen Love, let me help You to stand, let me kiss You, dry your Blood, and repair together with You for those who sin out of ignorance, fragility and weakness. I pray You to give help to these souls.

My Life, Jesus, making You suffer unheard-of spasms, your enemies have managed to put You on your feet, and as You walk, staggering, I hear your panting breath. Your Heart beats more strongly and new pains pierce It intensely. You shake your head in order to clear your eyes from the blood that fills them, and You gaze anxiously. Ah, my Jesus, I understood everything - your Mama, who is searching for You like a moaning dove, wants to tell You one last word, and receive your last gaze; and You feel Her pains, Her heart lacerated in Yours, moved and wounded by Her love and by Yours. You see Her pushing Her way through the crowd, wanting at any cost to see You, to hug You, to give You the last good-bye. But You are more transfixed in seeing Her mortal paleness, and all of your pains reproduced in Her by force of love. If She lives, it is only by a miracle of your Omnipotence. You move your steps toward hers, but You can hardly exchange a glance!

Oh, pang of your two Hearts! The soldiers notice it, and with blows and shoving prevent Mama and Son from exchanging the last good-bye. The torment of both is such that your Mama remains petrified by the pain, and is about to die. Faithful John and the pious women sustain Her, while You fall again under the Cross. Then, your sorrowful Mama does with Her soul that which She cannot do with Her Body, because She is prevented: She enters into You, makes the Will of the Eternal One Her own, and associating Herself in all your pains, performs the office of your Mother, kisses You, repairs You, soothes You, and pours the balm of Her sorrowful love into all your wounds!

My suffering Jesus, I too unite with the pierced Mama. I make all your pains, and every drop of your Blood my own; in each wound I want to act as a mama for You, and together with Her, and with You, I repair for all the dangerous encounters, and for those who expose themselves to occasions of sin, or, forced by necessity to be exposed, remain entangled in sin.

Meanwhile, You moan, fallen under the Cross. The soldiers fear that You may die under the weight of so many martyrdoms, and from the shedding of so much Blood. In spite of this, by lashes and kicks, with difficulty, they manage to put You on your feet again. And You repair for repeated falls into sin, for mortal sins committed by every class of people, and You pray for obstinate sinners, shedding tears of blood for their conversion.

My Love, overcome with pain, while I follow You in these reparations, I see You stagger under the enormous weight of the Cross. You are shivering all over. At the continuous shoving You receive, the

thorns penetrate more and more into your most holy head. The Cross, with its heavy weight, digs into your shoulder, to the extent of forming a wound so deep that the bones are exposed. At every step, it seems that You are dying, and unable to move any further. But your love, which can do everything, gives You strength, and as You feel the Cross penetrate into your shoulder, You repair for the hidden sins; those which, not being repaired, increase the bitterness of your spasms. My Jesus, let me place my shoulder under the Cross to relieve You and repair with You for all hidden sins. But your enemies, for fear that You may die under It, force the Cyrenean to help You carry the Cross. Unwilling and complaining, he helps You – not out of love, but by force. Then all the complaints of those who suffer, the lack of resignation, the rebellions, the anger and despising in suffering, echo in your Heart. But You remain even more pierced in seeing that souls consecrated to You, whom You call to be your help and companions in your suffering, escape You; and if You hug them to Yourself through suffering - ah, they wriggle free from your arms to look for pleasures, and so they leave You alone, suffering!

My Jesus, while I repair with You, I pray You to hold me in your arms, but so tightly that there may be no pain that You suffer in which I do not take part, so as to be transformed in them and make up for the abandonment of all creatures. My Jesus, overcome with weariness, all bent over, You can hardly walk; but I see that You stop and try to look. My Heart, what is it? What are You looking for? Ah, it is Veronica, who, fearless and courageous, with a cloth dries your Face all covered with blood, and You leave your Face impressed on it, as sign of gratitude. My generous Jesus, I too want to dry You, but not with a cloth; I want to expose all of myself to relieve You, I want to enter into your interior and give You, O Jesus, heartbeat for heartbeat, breath for breath, affection for affection, desire for desire. I intend to dive into your Most Holy Intelligence, and making all these heartbeats, breaths, affections and desires flow in the immensity of your Will, I intend to multiply them to infinity. I want, O my Jesus, to form waves of heartbeats, so that not one evil heartbeat may resound in your Heart, and so soothe all your interior bitternesses. I intend to form waves of affections and desires to cast away all evil affections and desires which might, even slightly, sadden your Heart. Still more, O my Jesus, I intend to form waves of breaths and thoughts, to cast away any breath or thought that could slightly displease You. I will be on guard, O Jesus, so that nothing else may afflict You, adding more bitterness to your interior pains. O my Jesus, please, let all of my interior swim in the immensity of yours; in this way I will be able to find enough love and will, so that no evil love may enter your interior, nor a will which may displease You.

O my Jesus, to be more certain, I pray You to seal my thoughts with Yours, my will with Yours, my desires with Yours, my affections and heartbeats with Yours; so that, being sealed, they may take no life but from You. I ask You, again, O my Jesus, to accept my poor body which I would want to tear to shreds for love of You, and reduce it to tiny little pieces, to place over each one of your wounds. On that wound, O Jesus, which gives You pain from so many blasphemies, I place a little piece of my body, wanting it to say to You constantly: "I bless You". On that wound that gives You so much pain from the many ingratitude, I intend, O Jesus, to place a portion of my body, to prove my gratitude to You. On that wound, O Jesus, which makes You suffer so much from coldness and lack of love, I intend to place many little bits of my flesh, to say to You constantly: "I love You, I love You, I love You!" On that wound which gives You so much pain from the so many irreverences to your Most Holy Person, I intend to place a piece of myself, to tell You always: "I adore You, I adore You, I adore You!" O my Jesus, I want to diffuse myself in everything, and in those wounds embittered by the many misbeliefs, I desire that the shreds of my body tell You, always: "I believe- I believe in You, O my Jesus, my God, and in your Holy Church, and I intend to give my life to prove my Faith to You!" O my Jesus, I plunge myself into the immensity of your Will, and making it my own, I want to compensate for all, and enclose the souls of all in the power of your Most Holy Will. O Jesus, I still have my blood left, which I want to pour over

your wounds as balm and soothing liniment, in order to relieve You and heal You completely. Again, I intend, O Jesus, to make my thoughts flow in the heart of every sinner, to reprimand him continuously, that he may not dare to offend You. And I pray to You with the voice of your Blood, so that all may surrender to my poor prayers. In this way I will be able to bring them into your Heart! Another grace, O my Jesus, I ask of You: that in everything I see, touch and hear, I may see, touch and hear always You; and that your Most Holy Image and your Most Holy Name, always be impressed in every particle of my poor being.

In the meantime, the enemies, disapproving of this act of Veronica, flog You, push You, and shove You on the way! A few more steps and You stop again. Even under the weight of so much suffering, your love does not stop, and on seeing the pious women weeping because of your pains, You forget Yourself and console them, saying: "Daughters, do not weep over my pains, but over your sins and over your children". What a sublime teaching, how sweet is your word! O Jesus, with You I repair for the lack of charity, and I ask You for the grace of making me forget myself, to remember nothing but You alone.

On hearing You speak, your enemies become furious, they pull You by the ropes, and push You with such rage as to make You fall. As You fall, You knock against the stones: the weight of the Cross crushes You, and You feel You are dying! Let me sustain You, and protect your most holy Face with my hands. I see You touch the ground and gasp in your Blood. But your enemies want to make You stand; they pull You by the ropes, they lift You by your hair, they kick You - but all in vain. You are dying, my Jesus! What pain - my heart breaks with grief! Almost dragging You, they take You up to Mount Calvary. As they drag You, I hear You repair for all the offenses of the souls consecrated to You, which weigh upon You so much that, as much as You try to stand, You cannot! And so, dragged and trampled upon, You reach Calvary, leaving behind You the red trace of your precious Blood.

Jesus is stripped and crowned with thorns for the third time.

But new sufferings await You here. They strip You again, tearing off both garment and crown of thorns. Ah, You groan in feeling the thorns being torn from inside your head. And as they pull your garment, they tear also the lacerated flesh attached to it. The wounds rip open, your Blood flows to the ground in torrents; the pain is such that, almost dead, You fall.

But nobody is moved to compassion for You, my Good! On the contrary, with bestial fury they put the crown of thorns on You again. They beat it on well, and the torture they cause You because of the lacerations and the tearing of your hair clotted in the coagulated blood, is such that only the Angels could tell what You suffer, while, horrified, they turn their celestial gaze away, and weep!

My stripped Jesus, allow me to hold You to my heart to warm You, as I see that You are shivering and an icy mortal sweat invades your Most Holy Humanity. How I would want to give You my life— my blood to take the place of yours, which You have lost to give me life!

In the meantime, barely looking at me with His languishing and dying eyes, Jesus seems to tell me: "My child, how much souls cost Me! This is the place where I wait for everyone in order to save them, where I want to repair for the sins of those who arrive at degrading themselves lower than beasts, and are so obstinate in offending Me as to reach the point of not being able to live without committing sins. Their minds remain blinded, and they sin wildly. This is why they crown Me with thorns for the third time. And by being stripped, I repair for those who wear luxurious and indecent clothing, for the sins against

modesty, and for those who are so bound to riches, honors and pleasures, as to make of them a god for their hearts.

Ah, yes, each one of these offenses is a death that I feel; and if I do not die, it is because the Will of my Eternal Father has not yet decreed the moment of my death!"

My stripped Good, while I repair with You, I pray You to strip me of everything with your most holy hands, and not to allow that any bad affection may enter into my heart. Watch over it; surround it with your pains; fill it with your love. May my life be nothing but the repetition of Yours; strengthen my stripping with your blessing; bless me from your Heart, and give me the strength to be present at your sorrowful crucifixion, to remain crucified with You!

Reflections and Practices

Jesus carries the Cross. The love of Jesus for the Cross, His anxious ardor to die on It for the salvation of souls, are immense! And we - do we love suffering like Jesus? Can we say that our heartbeats echo His divine heartbeats, and that we too ask for our cross?!

When we suffer, do we have the intention of becoming companions of Jesus in order to relieve Him from the weight of His Cross? How do we accompany Him? As He receives insults, are we always ready to give Him our little suffering as relief for His pains?

In working, in praying, and when we feel the hardship of our suffering under the weight of interior pains, do we let our pain fly to Jesus, which, like a veil, may dry up His sweat and cheer Him, as we make His hardship our own?

All: O my Jesus, call me always to be close to You, and remain always near me, so that I may comfort You always with my pains.