

THE
HISTORY OF THE PASSION
OF
OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

EXPLAINED AND APPLIED TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

BY

REV. JAMES GROENINGS

PRIEST OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS

FROM THE 1908 EDITION BY B. HERDER

Nihil Obstat

F. G. Holweck

Censor Theologicus

St. Louis, 17 January 1908

Imprimatur

✠ Joannes J. Glennon

Archbishop of St. Louis

St. Louis, 22 January 1908



© 2024 Tradidi. All rights reserved. While the text of this work is in the public domain, this edition's formatting, design, and any additional materials are protected by copyright.

Printed on 21 January 2025

SKU: 134

Contents

Preface.	i
1. The Sufferings of Christ's Soul in the Garden of Olives	1
The Sufferings as to Their Nature	3
The Sufferings as to Their Causes	7
2. Circumstances Surrounding the Sufferings of Christ in the Garden of Olives	13
The Circumstances of His Sufferings	14
The Motives Which Induced Him to Suffer.	18
3. The Prayer of Christ in the Garden of Olives.	23
The Circumstances of His Prayer.	25
The Qualities of His Prayer	27
The Effects of His Prayer.	29
4. The Repeated Appeals of Christ To His Apostles	35
The Reasons of the Repeated Visits of Christ to His Apostles	36
The Words Which He Spoke to Them	41
5. The Treason of Judas.	47
The Events Which Led Up to the Betrayal	48

The Final Execution of the Betrayal	54
The Innermost Source of the Betrayal	58
6. The Seizure of the Saviour	63
Miracles Proving His Divine Power	64
Miracles Proving His Divine Love	67
7. The Events Immediately Following the Seizure of Christ	75
The March From Mount Olivet to Annas	76
The Preliminary Trial Before Annas	80
8. The Trial of Christ Before Caiphas	87
The Testimony of the Witnesses	88
The Condemnation of the Accused.	92
The Unlawful Maltreatment of the Condemned	96
9. The Three Denials of Peter.	101
The Story of the Denial.	103
The Causes of the Denial.	107
The Contrition After the Denial	112
10. The Death of the Traitor	117
Judas Penitent	120
The Heartless and Hypocritical High Priest	123

The Despair and the Death of Judas	126
11. The Accusation Before Pilate	131
The Motives of the Accusation	133
The Negotiations With Pilate Concerning the Accu- sation	134
The Subject of the Charge Itself.	138
12. The First Hearing of Christ Before Pilate . . .	143
The Hearing Detailed.	144
The Chief Mistake of Pilate During the Hearing. .	149
13. Christ Before Herod	155
The Joy of Herod	157
The Disappointment of Herod	161
The Revenge of Herod	166
14. Christ and Barabbas	171
The Effort of Pilate to Release Christ	172
The Result of Pilate's Effort to Release Christ . . .	176
15. The Scourging of Christ.	183
The Scourging in Itself	183
The Special Reasons Why Christ Wished to Endure the Scourging.	188

16. The Crowning With Thorns	193
The Legitimate Title of Christ to a Crown	194
The Insignia Presented to Christ	196
The Homage Offered to Christ	200
17. Ecce Homo!	203
Another Effort of Pilate to Release Christ.	204
Its Result	206
18. The Second Hearing of Christ Before Pilate .	211
The Hearing in Detail.	211
The Mistakes of Pilate During the Trial	217
19. The Close of the Trial	221
The Last Attempt of Pilate to Release Christ	222
Pilate's Solemn Declaration of His Own Innocence	224
The Sentencing to Death of the Redeemer	228
20. The Carrying of the Cross	231
The Preparations For the Last Journey	231
The Journey to the Gate of the City	235
21. The March to the Place of Execution	241
The Sympathy of the Chief Priests	242
The Sympathy of the Women of Jerusalem	245

22. The Execution	253
The Final Preparations For the Crucifixion	255
The Crucifixion Itself	257
23. The First Word of Christ on the Cross	265
The Object of This Petition	266
The Reasons Adduced by Christ Why it Should be Granted	270
24. The Second Word of Christ on the Cross.	277
The Occasion of This Word	278
The Contents of This Word	283
25. The Third Word of Christ on the Cross	289
The Persons to Whom Christ Addressed the Third Word	290
The Third Word Itself.	294
26. The Fourth Word of Christ on the Cross.	301
The Meaning of These Words	302
The Reasons for Uttering These Words	304
The Different Impressions These Words Made Upon the Auditors	309
27. The Fifth Word of Christ on the Cross	313
The Reasons For Uttering This Complaint	314

Its Circumstances and Character	317
The Granting of the Petition Contained in This Complaint.	319
28. The Sixth Word of Christ on the Cross	323
A Real Sacrifice in the Strictest Sense of the Word	324
A Sacrifice of Infinite Value	330
29. The Seventh Word of Christ on the Cross	337
The Meaning of the Seventh Word	338
The Circumstances of its Utterance	341
30. The Sufferings of Christ on the Cross	347
In His Sacred Body	348
In His Honour	350
In His Soul	356
31. Wonderful Events Before and at the Death of Christ	363
These Wonderful Events in Themselves.	364
The Different Effects They Produced Upon Men.	369
32. The Events Immediately Following the Death of Christ	373
The Breaking of the Bones of the Thieves	374
The Opening of the Sacred Side.	376

33. The Last Events in the History of the Passion 383
The Taking Down From the Cross of the Sacred Body 384
The Preparation For the Burial 388
The Burial Itself 390

34. The Watch at the Tomb 397
The Negotiations Between the Chief Priests and
Pilate Concerning the Watch at the Tomb . . . 399
The Watch Over the Tomb Itself 403

Appendix—Notes 411

Preface

From the foreword of the first German edition.

This book is not, strictly speaking, a series of sermons or meditations on the sufferings of our Redeemer, but it is rather an explanation of the history of the Passion. It consists of a description of the most important and most interesting trial which has ever come before a court of justice, on whose final decision depends the weal or woe of the whole human race. The book is also a commentary on the greatest drama which has ever been enacted. Even considered from a purely natural point of view, the Passion of our Lord is a drama with which none other can be compared as regards the character of the actors, the magnitude of the action, the importance of the intrigue and the complexity of the plot. The unities of time and place have even been preserved.

In preparing this explanation and practical application of the history of the Passion, the author has spared no pains in gathering and using with discretion the best which Catholic learning and research has to offer on the subject. In pursuance of his object he has consulted by preference the great Catholic theologians of the past and from these treasure-houses of sacred knowledge has chosen the granite blocks from which to rear his edifice. The author has thought it wise not to draw from private revelations, no matter how venerable the names connected with them may be. Since it

is difficult to distinguish between what is in reality revealed in these revelations and what is merely the result of pious meditation, the author judged it more in accordance with his very calling as teacher and interpreter of the Gospel to rely solely on the Gospel narratives and the interpretation put upon them by the Fathers and by men scientifically trained for that purpose. The various personal revelations may, with due respect, be left to private devotion, pious reading and meditation.

How and to what extent exegetical matter should be incorporated in the work was determined by the double purpose in view, namely, to impart useful and interesting knowledge and to offer religious edification. The author does not pretend that he has always taken the correct stand on disputed points, but, on the other hand, he does not believe that he has made any assertion without good reason and without being able to quote, in support, authorities who command respect.

For the guidance of the reader, the passages from the four Gospels which provide the subject matter for each chapter have been indicated. The historical sequence of the different events, as far as it was possible to determine it, has been strictly observed, except that the mysteries of Mount Olivet have been arranged from an objective viewpoint and that the wonderful phenomena observed before and at the time of the death of our Lord have been condensed in one chapter. However, care has been taken to avoid confusing the order of events. Partly with a view to furnishing an authoritative foundation for interpretations and partly for the instruction

and encouragement of those who have not access to a large number of scientific works, notes on various difficult points have been added at the end of the book. They were placed there in order to avoid interrupting the text in a disagreeable manner by lengthy remarks which do not have the same interest for everyone. As far as circumstances permitted, the passages quoted from the Fathers, taken over, with few exceptions, from Cornelius a Lapide and Salmeron, have been covered with exact references and have been compared with the original texts. Unfortunately it was not possible to verify all the references to the Fathers.

Although, as has been stated, the work is not a book of meditations, in the strict sense of the term, it, nevertheless, affords abundant material for meditation and may even be considered as a preparatory school for meditation, because its purpose is to introduce us to a thorough knowledge of the history of the Passion of our Lord, to reveal to us His inner life and to inspire us to apply the truths here taught to our lives. But those who propose using the book for meditation will do well to remember the advice given by St. Ignatius in his *Spiritual Exercises*, namely, to take thoroughly to heart, in considering the persons, the words and the actions in the history of the Passion, what our Lord suffered in His sacred humanity, especially in His Divine Heart; how His divinity withdraws into the background, as it were, in order to abandon His sacred humanity to suffering, and how, finally, Christ suffers all these things for *each one of us* individually in accordance with the words of St. Paul. (Gal. 2:20) It was not feasible to repeat these

important and wholesome thoughts in every chapter, nor is it the intention of St. Ignatius that they themselves form the object of our meditations; they are rather to be considered, to use a comparison, as the glasses through which we are to behold the objects of our attention, i.e., the various events in the history of the Passion. It is sufficient to here remind the reader to keep these three points constantly before his mind.

As it was not practicable to indicate on every page the sources from which the various explanations were taken, we name here the chief works consulted in writing this book.

A. Salmeron, S. J., *Comment. in Evangel. Historiam*

Fr. Toletus, S. J., *Comment. in Joannis Evangelium*

Joh. Maldonat, S. J., *Comment. in quatuor Evangelistas*

Seb. Barradas, S. J., *Comment. in Concordiam et Historiam quatuor Evangelist*

Cornelius a Lapide, S. J., *Comment. in quatuor Evangelia*

P. A. Scherer, *Bibliothek für Prediger*

Fr. Xav. Massl, *Erklärung der heiligen Schriften des Neuen Testamentes*

Dr. P. Schegg, *Kommentare zu Matthäus und Johannes*

Dr. P. Schanz, *Kommentare zu den vier Evangelisten*

Dr. Joh. Nep. Sepp, *Das Leben Jesu Christi* (second edition)

Dr. P. Schegg, *Das Leben Jesu*

L. de Ponte, S. J., *Meditationes*

L. de la Palma, S. J., *Geschichte der heiligen Passion*

W. Stanihurstus, S. J., *Dei immortalis in corpore mortali patientis historia*

R. Bellarmin, S. J., *Die sieben Worte Christi am Kreuze*

Ad. Fr. Lennig, *Betrachtungen über das bittere Leiden Jesu Christi*

Ant. Etzinger, *Betrachtungen über das Leiden und Sterben Jesu Christi*

Dr. M. Breiteneicher, *Die Passion des Gottmenschen*

Dr. N. Gühr, *Das heilige Messopfer*

May by God's grace, the reading of this book help to inflame in our hearts the love of the Crucified.

The second English edition has been prepared from the fourth German edition with the addition of those improvements which are to be incorporated in a fifth German edition, should such be called for.

The Author

Buffalo, New York.

Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin,
8 December 1907

Chapter 1

**THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST'S SOUL
IN THE GARDEN OF OLIVES**

The Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar had been instituted. The words of leave taking had been spoken by the Saviour. The hymn of praise, prescribed by the law, had been sung. Then Jesus, as was His wont, went with His disciples to a garden situated on the Mount of Olives. The garden was distant about half a league from the Cenacle and belonged to a farm called Gethsemane, a word meaning "Oil Press." The way led over the brook Cedron, which, fed by the rains of winter, was dry in mid-summer. The word, "Cedron" means a dark, obscure ravine, a vale of shadows. This name had been given the stream either because of the darkness spread by the thick growth of woods along its borders, or because the valley of Josephat, through which it flowed, was the valley of sin, the valley of tombs. For there, in olden times, sacrifices were offered to Moloch, there the Jews were buried. Every year, over a specially constructed bridge, which spanned this deep rock-ribbed ravine, the red cow was led to the Mount of Olives, there to be burnt for the atonement of the people. Over the same way the scapegoat was driven out to be devoured by wild beasts, thus to give vicarious satisfaction for the sins of men. We now behold, following the same way, the Son of God, the Pure One, the innocent Lamb, Who shall take away the

sins of the world. In days gone by, King David with his faithful adherents had also crossed the Cedron, in tears and his head covered in mourning, for he was fleeing from his son Absalom. Christ crossed the brook, not to flee from His enemies, but to deliver Himself to the betrayer in the Garden of Olives. For Judas, the traitor, knew the place, because Jesus had often gone there with His disciples, especially in the days just passed.

On the way, Jesus, in clear terms, again foretold the unfaithfulness of the disciples, especially of Peter; but they would not believe Him. Peter, with self-confident presumption, protested anew that, even if all the others should be scandalized in the Master, he certainly would not; that he would rather die with Him than deny Him. Extolling himself above the others by his assurances of attachment and fidelity, Peter caused them to take offence, and they began to protest in like manner. But the Lord sought to prepare them for the things to come and to console them, even then, by directing their attention to His proximate resurrection. Conversing on these themes, they at length arrived at the garden of Gethsemane.

The events in the Garden of Olives can properly be considered under the following heads: Christ plunged in sadness and wrestling with death; Christ praying to His heavenly Father; Christ calling on His disciples; Christ betrayed by Judas; Christ captured by His enemies and forsaken by the apostles.

Let us consider, the sufferings of the Saviour's soul as to their nature and as to their causes.

The Sufferings as to Their Nature

The sufferings of our Saviour's soul in their first stage are described in the following manner by the evangelists: St. Matthew writes, "He began to grow sorrowful and to be sad. Then he saith to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death." St. Mark says, "And he began to fear and to be heavy. And he saith to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death."

The evangelists, then, make use of three expressions in characterizing the mental sufferings of the Saviour. They speak of sadness, of fear and of heaviness which we may call repugnance. *Sadness* is the result of present evil that already has befallen one; *fear* arises from the thought of future evil, to avoid which seems very difficult; *repugnance* is felt under the pressure of present inevitable evils and at the thought of future evils which appear unavoidable and are therefore considered as already present.

At the thought of present or future evils, we human beings are overwhelmed with sadness, fear and repugnance. For these passions or emotions do not arise in us as a result of reason's reflections or of free will. They rather have their origin in the lower powers of the soul, whence they ascend to the higher faculties, moving the will and alluring its sympathy. They run ahead of the reflections of reason, and they are present before one is aware of it. They therefore render more difficult the calm apprehension of the intellect. But thus far there is no personal fault, no sin. It is merely

something human, a peculiar result of our deteriorated nature. At this point however, it becomes the duty of the intellect and will to control and to conquer these ebullitions of passion by adducing motives of reason and of faith, and also by prayer and correspondence with divine grace. But instead of acting in such a manner, our walls too often, through our own fault, yield and allow full sway to the emotions and permit us to be carried onward to sins of impatience, anger and others similar, all of which causes the reason to become still more obscured.

It was not so with Christ. All that He suffered never in the least bedimmed the clear apprehension of reason. For with full conviction and freedom He first presented to His mind the causes of sadness, of fear and of repugnance. Then, it is true, He permitted these emotions to produce their painful effects to the fullest extent upon His will and, through the will, upon the other faculties of His soul. But at the same time He presented to His soul counter-motives, which encouraged Him to patiently undergo the sufferings, and, for our example, He simultaneously addressed Himself in earnest prayer to His heavenly Father. Thus He suffered and still always retained perfect control over these inner emotions.

We are here confronted by a great mystery. On the one hand, the soul of Christ from the moment of its creation, enjoyed the beatific vision and, in consequence, untold happiness whilst in the mortal body; but, on the other, it experienced sorrows from other causes and was sad even unto death.¹

¹ See note 1 in Appendix A.

Only a most incomprehensible miracle of Divine Power and Love could bring this about and did bring it about in the case of the Saviour alone. For faith teaches us that the blessed in heaven, owing to the beatific vision, are immune from any and all sufferings and that, after the last day, their bodies shall also be impassible.

In the second stage, the sufferings of the soul of Christ increased to a real fear of death, whence they passed to a condition of agony, or death-struggle, which produced a bloody sweat. This incident is mentioned by the evangelist St. Luke in the following terms: "And being in agony," i.e., whilst struggling against the fear of death, "he prayed the longer. And his sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground."

How shall we explain the fear of death in Christ? In the rest of men, this fear usually arises from three causes: from the consciousness of sins committed in the past, from the uncertainty of the future lot awaiting the soul and, lastly, from the natural reluctance of the soul to leave the body. It is evident that in Christ the fear of death could not arise from the first and second causes, for He had nothing to regret in the past, and, as to the future, He knew full well that He would go to the Father. The fear of death in Him arose, therefore, from the last mentioned cause. It is to be remarked, however, that the fear of death in Him was different from that which we experience. In us the repugnance to death and its fear are felt without the consent of our will, even against its consent, while in Christ the fear of death was willed with full deliberation and freedom.

The agony of the Saviour consisted in His struggling with the whole power of His will against the fear of death which He had freely admitted, in His subduing and conquering it. It was, indeed, a most remarkable conflict in the heart of the God-Man. Christ there appears as a general who, being certain of victory, challenges and provokes the enemy to combat, but only to conquer and to slay him.

The bloody sweat, finally, which accompanied the fear of death, was the result of the struggle and not of the fear. Fear, notably the fear of impending death, does not drive the blood out of the heart, but rather back to it. Fright and fear produce a pale, not a ruddy complexion. The bloody sweat, therefore, was the result of the death-struggle, that is, of the great effort of will power to overcome the fear of death. It must, indeed, have been a powerful effort, which drove the blood, after it had rushed through fear to the heart, back through the sacred body to find vent and burst forth in great drops through the pores.

There He lies, the Almighty, the Strong One of Israel, the Shield of the Hero, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, like to a worm trodden in the dust, scarcely able to emit a sigh. Finally, with great effort, He rises. He uplifts His face to heaven, and in the calm light of the full moon that Holy Face appears covered with innumerable red drops, and these drops are the heart's blood of the Son of God, which, amid the most fearful pains, is pressed from all the pores of His sacred Body. The bloody drops fall upon the earth to free it from the ancient curse, and, like to the blood of Abel, they cry to heaven, not for vengeance, however, but for mercy.

What then, we have a right to ask, were the causes which gave rise to these sufferings of the soul?

The Sufferings as to Their Causes

The sufferings of the soul of Christ resulted chiefly from four causes. The first cause was the clear knowledge the Saviour had of all the pains He had to endure in His natural body, in His sacramental body, and in His mystic body. The images of all the terrors and of all the tortures to be brought forth by the coming day arranged themselves vividly before His eyes. He beheld the bloody scourge, the crown of thorns, the dishonour of the purple mantle, the false testimonies, the scornful and biting jeers, the altar of sacrifice on Golgotha. These dreadful images caused Him to feel all the impending pains even before the rude menial raised the fearful scourge, before the cruel nails pierced His sacred hands and feet. The mere thought of an approaching operation or of a threatened disgrace has caused many a one to swoon. Why should it be a matter of surprise that the heart of the Redeemer, at the sight of such woes, trembled in its inmost fibres and prematurely shed its blood? Add to this the foreknowledge of all the wrong and ignominy He was to suffer in His sacramental body through the various sins against the Blessed Sacrament, of all the persecutions and outrages which would be heaped upon His mystic body, the holy Church, by infidels, heretics and schismatics, by cruel tyrants, by anti-Catholic governments and from the scandalous lives of many Catholics. He knew that He could no more endure these pains after His death,

therefore He drank in advance this cup of suffering in the garden of Gethsemane.

In the second place, the conduct of His ungrateful disciples was to the Redeemer a source of untold sadness. One is already on the way to betray Him for thirty pieces of silver; another, a few hours hence, will deny Him; all are indifferent and given over to careless slumber. In ages to come, the example of these ingrates will be followed by millions of Christians after they shall have reaped the abundance of His benefits, after they shall have been freed, through His precious Blood, from the thralldom of Satan and nourished with His own sacred flesh. Truly the Saviour could exclaim with the Psalmist, "I am become a stranger to my brethren, and an alien to the sons of my mother. And I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none; and for one that would comfort me and I found none."

The third cause was the painful knowledge that all His struggles and sufferings would be wasted on innumerable souls. Hear His plaint in the words of Isaias, the prophet: "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength without cause and in vain." May God grant that, in these pathetic lamentations, his thoughts were not directed towards any of us! Above all, He was afflicted at the thought of the awful end of His apostle Judas, as well as the temporal and eternal ruin towards which His chosen and beloved people of Israel were drifting.

All this is, indeed, more than sufficient to break a heart, even though that heart were divine. And still St. Chrysostom

says that we should err were we to think that the knowledge of all these sufferings was the principal cause of the mental grief and of the mortal anguish of Christ. For no matter how fearful these sufferings were, the Redeemer had anxiously desired them and intensely longed for them. No matter how heavy, how shameful the cross might be, no matter that to many it was a folly and a scandal, it would also bring salvation unto many; for Christ Himself it would be the foundation of His Glory; to the heavenly Father it would bring infinite honour.

It must, then, have been something else that made the soul of Our Saviour tremble; it must have been something else that could make of a God of infinite glory a God struggling with death. It was sin. "The sorrows of death surrounded me; and the torrents of iniquity troubled me." In the hour when the high priests and Pharisees consulted together in the court of Caiphas how they might apprehend Jesus, the heavenly Father imposed upon Him, (the purity of His soul, however, remaining unsullied), all the injustice of the whole world, the sins of all nations, the sins of all times, the sins of all classes; the sins of kings, the sins of subjects; the sins of the rich, the sins of the poor; the sins of parents and the sins of children. Is it a wonder that this burden of iniquities, laid upon the Saviour, should press Him to the ground?

To us, indeed, who know so little of the supernatural, sin often appears in more subdued colours. We excuse it, we consider it a mere weakness, something natural, a result of youth and of temperament. We fear at most the penalties of sin threatened by God's anger. But the soul of Christ saw,

clearly and distinctly, not only the entire series of sins, from the disobedience of our first parents down to the desolations of doomsday, but also all the malice, all the abomination, the revolt, the contempt, the dark ingratitude contained in each and every sin. Even when we recognize the wrong done to Almighty God by our sins, we take it little to heart, because we love Him so little. But the soul of Christ, which sought nothing more strenuously than the glory of His heavenly Father and which loved Him with an immeasurable love greater than that of all the Cherubim and Seraphim, felt most vividly the wrong inflicted on the Divine Majesty by sin. The sorrows of David over the injustices of the chosen people, the grief and indignation of Elias at the scandals and the idolatries of Israel, the tears of the prophet Jeremiah over the infidelities of Jerusalem were merely faint figures of the sadness of Jesus when He beheld the sins of the entire world.

And if this be true, we cannot shut out from our hearts another consideration. At the sight of our sins a God is seized with painful disquiet, and we remain calm. A God is sad over our sins, and we take pleasure therein. A God sweats blood for our sins, and we never shed a tear. We sin and, instead of hesitating and trembling, we think, perhaps, "I have sinned and what harm hath befallen me?" At the sight of our sins a God-Man writhes in agony, and we, perhaps, live on in a dreadful torpor which is an insult to the agony of Christ, in a false security, which, in a way, is more terrible than sin itself. We, perhaps, shall slumber on in utter blindness until that hour in which the voice of

the eternal Judge will awaken us. Oh, dreadful moment in which the Redeemer, now mute and patient in the Garden of Olives, burdened down with the mountain of our sins, will unsheathe before the sinner the flaming sword of vengeance! Oh, dreadful moment, in which the same Redeemer, who now sheds His blood for our sins, will demand of the sinner an account of the blood shed in vain! Oh, most dreadful moment, in which the heart, now tortured out of love for us, even unto death, will appear glowing with eternal wrath!

Still, however great our fault may be, even if our sins be as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore, we must not despair. Now is still the time of grace, even now, from all the pores of the Redeemer wrestling with death, His precious blood is being shed for us, even now His divine Heart is beating warmly for us. Let us firmly resolve to flee the monster sin which caused a God to tremble; by means of the Precious Blood, to purify ourselves in the sacrament of Penance, and, henceforth so to live as to justify the hope that, when we shall writhe in the throes of death, the agony of Christ may bring us, not despair, but solace; not ruin, but salvation.

Chapter 2

**CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING
THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST
IN THE GARDEN OF OLIVES**

*And he saith to them:
My soul is sorrowful even unto death.*

Mark 14:34

In considering the history of the Passion, we must, as much as possible, pass in review not only the chief events, but also the subordinate occurrences, even minute details narrated by the evangelists. Whatever, that is to say, the Holy Ghost, through the Sacred Scriptures, has made known to us concerning the person, the work and the Passion of Christ, cannot be considered small or trivial; it must be worthy of our consideration and mature reflection. These various outward circumstances are often full of deep mystery, and, when we penetrate into their meaning, they heighten the interest in the chief event itself. Furthermore, for a thorough understanding of the facts, it is also very useful to examine and investigate, with humble moderation, in so far as our limited powers will permit, their inward circumstances, i.e., the causes why they should and must have happened as they did.

We shall, therefore, stop at the subject of our first chapter in order to impress more clearly on our minds the picture of

the Saviour, sad even unto death and bathed in His blood. Let us consider the circumstances of His sufferings and the motives which induced Him to suffer.

The Circumstances of His Sufferings

The outward circumstances of the sufferings of the Redeemer's soul are threefold: circumstances of place, of time and of persons.

Let us consider first the **circumstances of place**. Christ began His Passion in a garden, more precisely, in an olive garden. When the Redeemer felt that the hour of His capture was drawing nigh, He left the Cenacle. He would not cause discomfort to the good man who had generously opened his house to Him for the institution of the Most Holy Sacrament. He wished to spare this friend all annoyance which might come to him, were the Lord to be seized in his house. He left the city altogether. Beyond its walls, in God's open country, He decided to begin and to end His Passion, to show that He shed His blood not for Jerusalem alone, but for the entire world. For the beginning of His Passion, He chose a wonderfully beautiful garden. How significant this choice was! In a garden the first Adam had committed the first sin, the sin of disobedience; therefore it was in a garden that the second Adam should say to His Father, "Not what I will, but what thou wilt." In a garden Adam, by an abuse of liberty, had plunged the entire human race into the most shameful captivity; in a garden, therefore, by the bonds of Christ our fetters were to be broken. In a garden God had pronounced the death penalty upon Adam; hence, in a

garden Christ would take upon Himself this judgment and this curse. In a garden the human race was lost; and usually an object is sought where it was lost. Christ had come into the world to lay out a garden wherein, amid splendour and abundance, there should thrive the violet of humility, the myrtle of mortification, the rose of love, the lily of virginal souls, the laurel of confessors and the palm of martyrs. It was necessary, then, that He should water and render fertile by His precious blood the soil of this garden. The garden of Gethsemane was furthermore an olive garden, at least it contained quite a number of olive trees, and, according to several interpreters of Holy Writ, the oil for the use of the temple was obtained here. This circumstance, again, is full of significance. "Oil illumines," says St. Bernard, "it nourishes and heals."¹ All these effects were to be produced by the blood of Christ in the Christian temple, and that in an infinitely greater degree than by the fruit of the olive tree in the Jewish temple. For Christ is the great olive tree, on which the heathen were grafted, according to St. Paul the Apostle. Now as the oil, before it could be used in divine service, had to be pressed forcibly from the fruit, so the blood of Christ also must be forced from His Sacred Body in His mighty agony.

Let us pass on to the **circumstances of persons**. Christ permitted only three of His apostles to be witnesses of His agony, namely, Peter, John and James. The reasons are easily surmised. First, Christ had specially prepared these three, and only these three, for the contemplation of this scene.

¹ S. Bern. serm. 15. sup. Cant. n. 5.

The rest of the pages have been removed from this preview..