

AGONY 4

“The world must be convinced that I love the Father, and act only as the Father has commanded me to act. Rise up, we must be going on our way” (Jn 14:31). And our Lord Jesus Christ took with Him Peter, James and John to the garden of Gethsemane. Arriving there, He prayed thrice, *“My soul, He said, is ready to die with sorrow... My Father, if it is possible, let this chalice pass me by; only as thy will is, not as mine is”* (Mt 26:38-39).

A. The prayer of our Lord at the Garden

We must distinguish in His prayer, as man, His deepest natural will and His deliberate will. The first one is filled with abhorrence before His horrific Passion and Death. The second one offers His Life without any hesitation, under the influence of Love toward His Father. *“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour. But for this cause I came unto this hour”* (Jn 12:27). These words are the expression of the reason of Christ our Lord, which advocates for both wills.

Massillon wrote that *“because of his excellence, Christ was always answered”*. However, *“Christ, during his earthly life, offered prayer and entreaty to the God who could save Him from death, not without a piercing cry, not without tears”* (Heb. 5:7).

Our Lord has always been answered, but only when He was asking in an absolute manner, so that He would be heard, which is not the case here. What He is asking here, He does not propose it as His own.

St John Chrysostom sees this expression is interrogative: *“If it is possible? And what to say? Shall I say, Father, save Me from this hour? As if our Lord would say: No, that, I will not tell”*.

The Lord teaches us that we must not resist the dispositions of Divine Providence. *“Who hath resisted Him, and hath had peace?”* (Job:9,4).

B. The Passion is called a chalice

The Passion is only bitterness, but it derives its hidden sweetness from the Love of the One who suffers it. It is a terrible remedy, an ocean of bitterness to swallow. It is, however, sweet insofar as it offers an infinite hope of healing. *“I will take the chalice of salvation; and I will call upon the name of the Lord”* (Ps. 115:13).

The Father presents this chalice to His Son Who accepts it freely. He wants to fulfill perfectly His mission of Redeemer, Priest and Victim. He expresses His ardent thirst for our redemption and His strong desire to offer Himself as a victim to redeem us.

The fullness of grace is commensurate with His dignity as the Son of God and His mission as the universal Mediator.

“Amor meus, pondus meum,” says St Augustine: My love is like a weight that drags me towards the loved object. Listen to our Lord: *“Did you not know, that I must be about my father’s business?”* (Lk 2:49). *“Yes, if only I am lifted up from the earth, I will attract all men to*

myself” (Jn 12:32). “*It is fire that I have come to spread over the earth, and what better wish can I have than that it should be kindled?*” (Lk 12:49). “*With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you, before I suffer... This is the chalice, the new testament in My blood, which shall be shed for you*” (Lk 22:15 & 20).

He “*Who for us men and for our salvation came down from Heaven*” thirsts for our redemption, the very motive of His Incarnation. “*Only as thy will is, not as mine is*”, He also wants to experience the supreme anguish for His own Holocaust to be perfect.

His fear became so great that He said: “*My soul is sorrowful even unto death*” (Mc 14:34). And He sweated blood in such abundance that St. Luke says: “*His sweat fell to the ground like thick drops of blood*” (22:44), which supposes that his clothes were all imbibed with His blood. His soul is “*sad to death*” (Mt 26:38), and He wants to experience this sadness to show that He loves, that He is truly a man, and that we are allowed to complain in real painful hours.

Bishop de Boismenu explained the fight that we can experience in our heart at a much lower level. “*We have a heart, it is to love. Our Lord loved. What He does not want is that we love to cling to. You have to be able to let go at the first call and be ready for all separations... but it hurts...*” Soon after, to Peter who wants to defend Him with his sword, He replies: “*Put up thy sword into the scabbard. The chalice which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*” (Jn 18:11). These words come from His speech at the Cenacle, before the Last Supper, when He said that “*Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends?*” (Jn 15:13).

The sadness of Christ’s heart is caused by His Love. He loves His Father offended by the sins of the world and loves us, sinners who offend Him. His Love hates sin, but loves the sinner who can still be saved with the help of God and the gift of freedom. It is impossible for us to fathom the suffering of our Redeemer due to His accurate and penetrating sight on the crimes of men.

St. Catherine of Siena felt the nausea of seeing the deplorable state of certain souls. What could we say about our Lord? Our words are far too weak. He sees the concupiscence of the flesh, of the eyes, and the pride of life in souls, as we could see the purulent wounds of a body eaten away by leprosy.

His Agony is measured by His Love for His Father offended by our sins and by His Love for sinners’ souls whom sin ravages and causes to die.

To see sins with an abyssal sadness do not suffice Him, He takes them on Him. “*Surely he hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows: and we have thought Him as it were a leper, and as One struck by God and afflicted?*” (Is. 53:4). He appeared horribly and without limit as a leper, as struck by God and afflicted, as His plenitude of Grace and Charity increased without measure His propensity to suffering and, unfortunately, our egoism still prevents us from grieving as we should.