

THE SCOURGING AT THE PILLAR 2

The Flagellation of our Lord and the Reign

The reign of Jesus is, therefore, non-violent, non-aggressive, and without earthly pretensions. His Kingdom is not of this world. This reign is exercised by the Truth, as is said to Pilate.

And the truth in question is the project of God which reveals what the vocation of man is. That of being a son called to walk towards his Father to be filled by Him. A reign that relativizes our human hopes to orient us towards the Hope offered by God. Christ tells us that the true Kingdom is not the one we could build by our own hands, that man does not have the power to satisfy by himself the love for which he is created.

Man is created by God to be filled with unlimited, infinite tenderness, in the face of which all human power is limited and, therefore, relative

A. The scourged Christ

Our Lord is seen reduced to impotence in the face of the power of men. It reiterates that the essential is not in what we control, acquire or build by our own strength, but in that which is received, in all gratuitousness, for it is the love of God.

The Flagellation, as inauguration of the Cross, reveals a vulnerable Christ, renouncing all power over Himself, any power that would impose himself on others, a Messiah reduced to an attitude of reception, tributary to the gift of God.

B. The scourge is made of leather thongs to which are attached small sharp bones.

Jesus was led a short distance from Pilate's chambers into a courtyard for the scourging. He was stripped of His clothing, except for His undergarment. Small sharp bones were tied to the ends of each leather strip so that they would cut deeply into the flesh.

C. Jesus is bound to a pillar and cruelly scourged. His body is covered with deep wounds.

His hands were tied to a post to make the suffering greater and the damage more serious. One executioner stood on either side of Him so that Jesus' entire body, front and back from His neck to His feet, was covered with lashes. The two executioners alternately swung their whips with the force of their entire bodies.

The number of lashes: It was strictly limited to 40 by Hebrew law, but the Pharisees, to be certain not to break the law, only gave 39. However, for the Romans, there was no limit, except that the condemned man still had to be able to carry his cross to the place of execution. Jesus being condemned to flogging by Pilate (Roman), the number of lashes may not be limited.

The Gospels report that Jesus could no longer bear His Cross and that it was necessary to call on the assistance of a passer-by. This may correspond to a particularly severe flogging

and, moreover, those who have studied the traces of flogging on the Shroud have raised the mark by more than 100 shots, which, at the rate of 2 straps per whip, indicates at least 50 lashes.

D. The Lamb of God offers His suffering for the sins of mankind.

At each stroke, Christ's body shook with an agonized shudder, but He did not utter a word, and His silence redoubled the rage of His executioners.

Scourging had the potential to kill the victim because of the violence that was inflicted. The art of the torture was to bring someone close to the point of death without having him expire.

Jesus' subcutaneous tissue was unusually sensitive because of the sweating of blood, the Hemathidrosis of His Agony, so that the scourging was even more severe for Him.

The Shroud clearly shows the effect of the leather strips with the bones attached. At first, the thongs bruised the skin and caused contusions. Then, as the blows continued, they cut deeper into the subcutaneous fatty tissue causing an oozing of blood and serum from smaller vessels. Finally, the sharp bones cut more deeply into the underlying muscle tissue. Blood spurted from open arteries; the skin and muscles hung in long, quivering ribbons. The entire area was an unrecognizable mass of torn, bleeding tissue.

“This was done that we might be delivered from those stripes of which it is said: Many stripes shall be to the wicked. (Ps. 32:10.) Also in the washing of Pilate's hands all the works of the Gentiles are cleansed, and we are acquitted of all share in the impiety of the Jews” (St Jerome).

E. Jesus suffers so much in His sacred flesh to satisfy, especially, for sins of the flesh.

After 45 minutes, when this brutal torture was completed and Christ was nearly unconscious, they untied His hands and He collapsed to the ground. His open, bleeding wounds were contaminated with dust and dirt.

The scourging was endured in reparation for our sins of impurity. The mortification of the senses is our answer, that is, to avoid listening, seeing, feeling or touching anything that can push us or suggest sin to us.

F. The prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled:

“Nay, here is one despised, left out of all human reckoning; bowed with misery, and no stranger to weakness; how should we recognize that face? How should we take any account of Him, a man so despised? Our weakness, and it was He who carried the weight of it, our miseries, and it was He who bore them. A leper, so we thought of Him, a man God had smitten and brought low; and all the while it was for our sins he was wounded, it was guilt of ours crushed Him down; on Him the punishment fell that brought us peace, by his bruises we were healed” (Is 53:3-5).

“Bless the Lord, O my soul: and let all that is within me bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all He hath done for thee. Who forgiveth all thy iniquities: Who healeth all thy diseases. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction: Who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion” (Ps. 102:1-4).