

WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK

The desire that Jesus Christ had to suffer and die

25.1 First Point

Jesus Christ came down from heaven only to procure the salvation of all people. He knew that this purpose would not be accomplished unless he suffered much and died on the cross. Therefore, at the moment of his incarnation, he offered himself to the Eternal Father to suffer whatever would be in accord with his will in order to satisfy for our sins.

For it was impossible, says Saint Paul, that sins should be blotted out by the blood of goats and bulls. For this reason, continues the same Saint Paul, Christ said to God: Holocausts and sin offerings have not pleased you; then said I, behold, I come to fulfill your will. It is this same will, affirms the same apostle, that has sanctified us by the offering that Jesus Christ made once for all of his body.¹⁶⁸

Adore the holy disposition which Jesus Christ had on coming into the world, which he always continued to maintain: to suffer and to die for our sins and for those of all men. Thank him for such goodness, and make yourselves worthy to receive the benefits of salvation by your own sharing in his sufferings.

25.2 Second Point

The tender love Jesus Christ has for sinners not only inspired him with this willingness to suffer and to die for us, but even made him conceive a great desire of doing so. This made him say, longing for the destruction of sin, I have come to bring fire upon the earth, and what do I desire save that it be kindled?¹⁶⁹

But as he saw that this fire of God's love could not exist in us save through the destruction of sin, and because sin could only be destroyed by his suffering and death, he added, speaking of his death, I have a baptism with which I am to be baptized; Oh, how I long that it be accomplished!¹⁷⁰ By these words he indicated how great was the anguish he experienced because this plan for his death, which was to be so very advantageous to all people, was taking so long to be accomplished, for this delay also delayed their salvation.

Are you not ashamed that Jesus Christ had such a great desire for your salvation and still desires it so strongly today, while you correspond so little to his ardent desire?

25.3 Third Point

Jesus Christ was not content to have had this yearning to die for us all during his life. When he saw the time of his death approaching, he testified to his joy. This is what made him say to his apostles when he celebrated the Last Passover with them: that he had for a long time desired to eat this meal with them and that he had a very strong desire to celebrate this Passover with them.¹⁷¹ He knew that this was to be the final act of his mortal life and the last meal he would eat with his apostles before suffering and dying for us, which was what he had most at heart.

This is also what made him cry out, shortly before dying, that he was thirsty.¹⁷² The holy fathers understand this thirst as the longing for our salvation which impelled him. This was also what made him say these words as he was dying, that All is consummated,¹⁷³ because what he had so longed for—to suffer for our salvation—had finally been accomplished.

All that remains on your part, Saint Paul says, is to complete what is lacking in the Passion of Christ ¹⁷⁴, that is, the application which ought to be made of the Passion to yourselves through the sharing that you will have in his sufferings. Make yourselves, then, worthy of such a grace.

168 Heb 10:4-7, 10

169 Lk 12:49

170 Lk 12:50

171 Lk 22:15

172 Jn 19:28

173 Jn 19:30

174 Col 1:24