



MAKE THIS YOUR BEST LENT EVER!

THE PASSIONTIDE “TO DO” LIST

- Pray and meditate on at least one of the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary each day.
- Read, meditate and discuss with family and friends one of Stations of the Cross per day—there are 14 days to Easter, which allows for one a day.
- Read from a book on the Passion of Our Lord throughout this fourteen day period. The whole book need not be finished, but draw as much as possible out of the sections you do read.
- Have a longer way and a shorter way of making the fourteen Stations of the Cross. Try do at least the shorter one daily. It could be as simple as announcing the Station, spending a minute reflecting on the event and ending with an Our Father, Hail Mary and a Glory Be.
- Cut-out the fun in all its forms. TV, the internet, videos, movies, radio, music, idle cell phone talk, social media. Place all these and other such things aside for this solemn and somber period.
- Eat in silence at family meals, with someone reading at table from a book on the Passion, while others eat.

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LESSONS FROM THE CHARACTERS OF THE PASSION: HEROD

HEROD: A LESSON ON SELF-LOVE

Is it possible for a soul to have too many opportunities for conversion, so that in the end he becomes blinded by the very Light that should have illumined his path to God? Herod gives the answer.

His capital was at Tiberias about fifteen miles from Nazareth and ten miles from Capharnaum, along the sea of Galilee where Our Lord spent so much of His ministry. Herod must have heard much of Our Lord, not only because of the smallness of his kingdom, but also because the Gospel tells us that Joan, the wife of Herod’s steward, was healed of evil spirits by Our Lord and afterward “ministered” to the itinerant Jesus and His Apostles by surrendering her wealth. We read in Acts that Manahen, a “foster brother” of Herod, became one of the first Christian teachers in Antioch. The influence of Our Lord at least entered into Herod’s household and friendships—even though it did not penetrate his heart.

Two episodes lay bare the soul of Herod. The first, his divorce from his wife and his second marriage to Herodias, who was his brother’s wife and also the daughter of his half-brother, Aristobulus. As our modern world would put it: *“There was incompatibility between Herod and his first wife, but he and Herodias had so many things in common!”*—so why not get married?

The second revealing act of Herod is his treatment of John the Baptist. He had invited John the Baptist into his palace, not to hear the truth of John’s preaching, but to superficially enjoy the thrill of his oratory. There are many in the world who are like that—they do not want to become better; they only want to feel better. But John was not the type of preacher who toned down his message to suit the paganism of his hearers. Because he condemned Herod’s second marriage, he lost his head. Everyone in the world at one time loses his head, but it is better to lose one’s head John’s way, in the defense of truth, rather than Herod’s way, in wine and passion.

After John’s decapitation, Herod heard of Jesus, and thought Jesus might be John’s avenging spirit or ghost, that come back to haunt him. Full of superstition he thought that it was John risen from the dead. *“Now Herod, the tetrarch, heard of all things that were done by Him; and he was in a doubt, because it was said by some, that John was risen from the dead; but by others that Elias had appeared; and by still others, that one of the old prophets was risen again. And Herod said, ‘John I have beheaded; but who is this of whom I hear such things?’ And he sought to see Him”* (Luke 9:7-9). In such a way, people, who have no religion, become addicts of superstition.

After the execution of John the Baptist, Our Lord withdrew in the desert. *“The same day, there came some of the Pharisees, saying to him: ‘Depart and get Thee hence, for Herod hath a mind to kill Thee!’ And He said to them: ‘Go and tell that*

THE HOLY WEEK "TO DO" LIST

- Make a Calendar for the week.** Use either a large sheet of paper (11x17), or 7 Letter Size (8½x11) sheets of paper for the days Palm Sunday to the Paschal Vigil (Saturday).
- Write-out a Schedule** for each day of Holy Week—listing the activities and times for them. Then post it in highly visible and highly frequented place for all family members to see. If you commit yourself to putting in writing and everyone sees it daily, then there is a greater chance that you will follow the schedule, rather than it just being “word of mouth”. You can also set an alarm clock to sound five minutes before each activity starts.
- Make some General Rules** that will send a clear a message to everyone that this really is going to be a Holy Week. The rules can/should cover prayer times; quantity of prayer (which would lengthen the usual prayer time); perhaps a family reading of the Passion of Christ, giving a it 15 minutes or more per day; making conversation at table spiritual and not worldly; curtailing all “fun” and “leisure” activities, etc. These are just the tip of the iceberg of potential rules that can be introduced for Holy Week.
- Perhaps set aside a day for the whole family to go and make a Holy Hour** at the church in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.
- Set aside a time for a serious examination of conscience for all family members.** Use an printed version of an examination of conscience from a good book. This website also has a thorough examination of conscience at <http://www.devotiontoourlady.com/confession-of-sins.html>
- Impose some extra family penances for this final week of Lent.** It could be related to food and drink; the room temperatures; the time going to bed at night; the time of rising in the morning; etc.

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fox—“Behold, I cast out devils, and do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I am consummated!” Nevertheless I must walk today and tomorrow, and the day following, because it cannot be that a prophet perish, out of Jerusalem” (Luke 13:31-33).

Recall that Pilate was the governor of the southern Kingdom of Judea, whereas Herod was the tetrarch of the northern Kingdom of Israel. During the trial before Pilate, Our Lord was charged with being too political. Pilate, after examining Our Lord, went out to the porch of the Temple and said to the Lord’s accusers: “I find no cause in this man” (Luke 23:4). That should have been the end of the trial. But the multitude shot back: “He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place” (Luke 23:5).

Galilee! How Pilate seized upon that word. If Our Lord were from Galilee then He was not under Pilate’s jurisdiction. It was a diplomatic stroke of political opportunism. As a Galilean He was under the jurisdiction of Herod, and Herod was in Jerusalem that very day for the Paschal season. Off to Herod He must go. It was “good politics,” which means it was expedient, but morally it was downright dishonesty and knavery.

Herod had all the vices of his father—cruel, avaricious, dissipated-but not his genius for cunning. He was an Edomite, and the Edomites were the descendants of Esau who had sold his birthright to Jacob for a mess of porridge, and who thus had become the father to a people who loved more than valued things of this Earth.

Esau is recorded in Scripture as the type of sensual man who did not rise above the animal, and whose epitaph is written in the New Testament: “Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau; who for one mess, sold his first birth right” (Hebrews 12:16). Nowhere in the Old Testament do we hear of Edomite gods or Edomite religion. They were people without conscience, living on spoils and vengeance. Their one quality was shrewdness, and Our Lord stamped their race with it when He called Herod a fox (Luke 13:32).

Our Lord now stands before the fox, the traitor, incestuous adulterer, assassin of John, enemy of the people, the most fitting person in the world to condemn innocence. That Babe of Bethlehem Whom his father tried to kill now stands manacled before Herod. “And Herod seeing Jesus, was very glad; for he was desirous of a long time to see him, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to see some sign wrought by him” (Luke 23:8).

Herod was glad! But glad only because he hoped to see a trick. He would compel Our Lord to display some magic to save His life. This is all religion means to some people: a passing delectation to get them over a moment in the intolerable boredom of life. It makes them feel good between satieties. Herod’s court was there; his bodyguard, courtesans, sycophants, and probably Herodias and Salome, whose hands were still wet with the blood of the Baptist.

Herod began by asking Our Lord many questions, not questions of doctrine and discipline as Annas had done, but questions prompted by curiosity. Jaded souls present intellectual difficulties, never pleas for moral regeneration. Therefore to all the questions Our Lord answered him nothing. He tried to save Judas and Pilate, but for Herod—not a word.

Why did Our Lord refuse to speak to Herod? Can it be that He who came to save all men and Who loved them enough to die for them, should still not even try to win calloused souls like Herod? Why should He Who spoke to Judas the traitor, Magdalen the harlot, and the thief, now be silent before a king?

Because the conscience of Herod was dead. He was too familiar with religion. He wanted miracles, yes, but not to surrender his will, but to satisfy his curiosity. His soul was already so blunted by appeals, including even the Baptist’s, that another appeal would only have intensified his guilt. He was stone deaf on the side of God. He was as one dead in body and soul, eaten by luxury and sin. Herod was not offering his soul for salvation, but only his nerves for titillation.

Spiritualized sensation-hunting is not religion. Christ is no minister to the senses. The capacity for holiness had been killed in Herod.

So the Lord of the universe spoke not a word to the worldling. Nero had the conscience of Seneca to guide him, but it did not restrain his lust and cruelty. Alexander had Aristotle, but it did not temper his imperialism. Herod the Great had the Wise Men, but it did not hinder his butchery. Herod his son had John the Baptist,

FOCUS ON THE CROSS

The cross, therefore, is always ready; it awaits you everywhere. No matter where you may go, you cannot escape it, for wherever you go you take yourself with you and shall always find yourself. Turn where you will — above, below, without, or within — you will find a cross in everything, and everywhere you must have patience if you would have peace within and merit an eternal crown.

If you carry the cross willingly, it will carry and lead you to the desired goal where indeed there shall be no more suffering, but here there shall be. If you carry it unwillingly, you create a burden for yourself and increase the load, though still you have to bear it. If you cast away one cross, you will find another and perhaps a heavier one. Do you expect to escape what no mortal man can ever avoid? Which of the saints was without a cross or trial on this earth? Not even Jesus Christ, our Lord, whose every hour on earth knew the pain of His passion. "It behooveth Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead, . . . and so enter into his glory." How is it that you look for another way than this, the royal way of the holy cross?

The whole life of Christ was a cross and a martyrdom, and do you seek rest and enjoyment for yourself? You deceive yourself, you are mistaken if you seek anything but to suffer, for this mortal life is full of miseries and marked with crosses on all sides. Indeed, the more spiritual progress a person makes, so much heavier will he frequently find the cross, because as his love increases, the pain of his exile also increases.

Yet such a man, though afflicted in many ways, is not without hope of consolation, because he knows that great reward is coming to him for bearing his cross. And when he carries it willingly, every pang of tribulation is changed into hope of solace from God. Besides, the more the flesh is distressed by affliction, so much the more is the spirit strengthened by inward grace.

Not infrequently a man is so strengthened by his love of trials and hardship in his desire to conform to the cross of Christ, that he does not wish to be without sorrow or pain, since he believes he will be the more acceptable to God if he is able to endure more and more grievous things for His sake.

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but it did not prevent his mockery of religion.

Herod stands as the type of those who have already had enough knowledge about religion, but refuse to do anything about it. The Scripture describes them: "Because they have hated instruction, and received not the fear of the Lord" ... "Then shall they call upon me, and I will not hear" (Proverbs 1:29, 28).

Men have spoken of Hell in various images but none are more terrible than the image of the silence of God. "...O my God, be not thou silent to me: lest if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit" (Psalms 28:1).

God sometimes judges in silence. And that silence of Our Lord clamored more in Herod's ear than did the loud rebuke of John the Baptist. Such silence is thunder, for it is the penalty God inflicts on the soul that is not sincere or that looks for a truth not to embrace but to reject.

Probably the worst punishment God can visit upon a soul is to leave it alone. Then no sound, no ruffled conscience, no reproach. "Ephraim is joined to his idols! Let him alone." Nature speaks to us in the reproachful language of pain, whenever we violate its laws. For example, break a bone—and nature will painfully tell you something is wrong. A toothache proves nature has a tongue that is warning us remedy the evil. Conscience too has a voice; it bids us turn back again to God with every remorse.

But there are some diseases that kill without the voice of pain—the cancer that destroys in silence (at least in the beginning of the disease). So too with conscience. If it no longer speaks to you in remorse, then don't presume that you are healthy. Your soul may be dead. Our Lord will answer you nothing then, even when you robe Him as a fool. Then the hush about the cross to which you have sent Him will be His last appeal.

This is the punishment, too, of the secular spirit of the modern world. Its soul has become dead to religion. Religion has become to the modern mind a vulgar curiosity. Beware of a dead conscience, of turning dead ears to the thousand-and-one actual graces that come to you in a month to turn to God, to seek the truth, to purge your conscience. Beware of that moral trifling which seals the lips of God, because there is nothing in such a soul where the spirit of God can operate.

Woe to those who boast their consciences are clear when they are really dead. Tell them of a fault or a duty undone, and they reply confidently that it does not trouble them. Regardless of what others may think, the sin is not on their consciences. Well may they search their souls and ask if their peace be not the false deadly peace of the devil's palace where he dwells with all his armor. "When a strong man armed keepeth his court, those things are in peace which he possesseth" (Luke 11:21).

There does come a time every now and then in history when the moral judgments of religion on an outmoded society fall on dead ears: "They have ears and hear not." What good does it do today for religion to tell the modern world that divorce and the breakdown of family life will end in the destruction of the nation? Who will listen to us if we say that a state that persecutes religion is a menace to the world? Who heeds the warning to capitalists that the privacy of profits is wrong when the principles of social justice are ignored and to labor leaders that organization is not an end in itself, but only a means to the common good of a nation?

The dead consciences have only one reaction to religion, and it is the same as the reaction of Herod, namely, to resort to mockery, which seemingly gives them intellectual superiority. By regarding others as beneath one's intelligence, one seems to put himself above their intelligence.

This brings us to the second act in the drama of Herod: the robing of Christ in the garment of a fool and sending Him back to Pilate. In Rome when a man was a candidate for office he clad himself in a white robe—*toga candida*, whence comes our word "candidate" (*candida* is Latin for "white") — and went from elector to elector seeking suffrage. Perhaps by robing Him thus, Herod meant to suggest here was a candidate for kingship and divinity, but a candidate whose claims were receiving little support either from a procurator or a tetrarch.

It was a good joke. He could trust Pilate to see the humor of it. It would serve a double purpose; it would prove Christ was a fool, and when Pilate and he would laugh over it they would be friends, for when men laugh together, enmity ceases, even when the butt of the humor is God.

FOCUS ON THE CROSS (continued from previous page)

It is the grace of Christ, and not the virtue of man, which can and does bring it about that through fervor of spirit frail flesh learns to love and to gain what it naturally hates and shuns. (cont. next page)

To carry the cross, to love the cross, to chastise the body and bring it to subjection, to flee honors, to endure contempt gladly, to despise self and wish to be despised, to suffer any adversity and loss, to desire no prosperous days on earth — this is not man's way.

If you rely upon yourself, you can do none of these things, but if you trust in the Lord, strength will be given you from Heaven and the world and the flesh will be made subject to your word. You will not even fear your enemy, the devil, if you are armed with faith and signed with the cross of Christ.

Set yourself, then, like a good and faithful servant of Christ, to bear bravely the cross of your Lord, Who out of love was crucified for you.

Be ready to suffer many adversities and many kinds of trouble in this miserable life, for troublesome and miserable life will always be, no matter where you are; and so you will find it wherever you may hide.

Thus it must be; and there is no way to evade the trials and sorrows of life but to bear them.

Drink the chalice of the Lord with affection it you wish to be His friend and to have part with Him. Leave consolation to God; let Him do as most pleases Him.

On your part, be ready to bear sufferings and consider them the greatest consolation, for even though you alone were to undergo them all, the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come.

When you shall have come to the point where suffering is sweet and acceptable for the sake of Christ, then consider yourself fortunate, for you have found paradise on earth. But as long as suffering irks you and you seek to escape, so long will you be unfortunate, and the tribulation you seek to evade will follow you everywhere.

If you put your mind to the things you ought to consider, that is, to suffering and

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Wicked power cannot stand the vision of an innocent conscience. From the days of youth, when the good boy is ridiculed by bad boys, because his goodness is a judgment passed upon them, to the days of maturity, when evil men ridicule religion, the moral is ever the same: Religious persecution arises in the world, not because religion is corrupt, but because consciences are corrupt.

One of the penalties of being religious is to be mocked and ridiculed. If Our Lord submitted Himself to the mocking humor of a degenerate tetrarch, we may be sure that we, His followers, will not escape. The more divine a religion is, the more the world will ridicule you, for the spirit of the world is the enemy of Christ. Purely humanistic religions and popular sects, founded by emotional moderns, are never the object of the world's scorn. But once a religion lays claim to being divine, then it must be prepared to accept the mockery and insults of that which is not divine. Then laughter and humor, which are so necessary to human existence, become downright wicked because they are turned against Him Who gave them.

Now look at the ridicule of religion from the side of those who inflict it. There it exacts a terrible penalty, for it blinds the scoffer to his greatest need and to his own salvation. It is very much like a starving man who scoffs at a neighbor who gives him food because the neighbor happens to be poorly clad.

The tragedy of religious mockery is that it rejects Him Who alone can save. Herod rejected his own peace in ridiculing the Prisoner before him. They, too, who offer no intellectual opposition but who turn to ridicule everything that pertains to religion, and who laugh at the saved and sneer at the holy, shall go out into the night unblessed and weeping.

Our present moment is something like that in which the conscience of Our Lord stood impotent before Herod. We are being robed in the garment of a fool. We are mocked if we preach Christ's teaching. We are called fools if we ask for the restoration of religion to education; fools if we affirm that all political power is from God; fools if we insist that world unity is impossible without a recognition of a universal moral law; fools if we pray, if we fast, if we discipline ourselves.

And there is the answer: Fools we must be as Christ was mocked as a fool. An era of sensuality is necessarily an era of persecution. An age of unreason is an age of mockery. Wicked power will not submit to the judgment of truth. Bring out, then, your white robes of mockery, O Lord, as you did to Christ, that You may show the great gulf that is fixed between You and the servants of the Spirit. Take on that robe of a fool, fellow Christians, for a new crime is arising in the world, the crime of being a Christian. Your Christ has worn the robe of a fool before you: *"But God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise"* (1 Corinthians 1:27).

His robe of glory in Heaven is white, too. The Book of the Apocalypse tells us that the robe of the martyr is white. Let the soldiers take this white robe of Herod and raffle it off with the shake of dice. Thy robes of glory will be white, not as mock symbols of candidacy for political power, but as the glorious badge of the children of the Lamb. Be not cast down as you wear the robe. You will be hated for a time: *"I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you"* (John 15:19). *"In the world you shall have distress"* (John 16:33).

Divinity is the one thing in the world before which people cannot remain long indifferent. They must either love or hate. Christ is too big to be ignored, too holy to be unhated. What the evil spirits said of Him could be put into the lips of everyone who works evil: *"What have we to do with the Jesus of Nazareth. Are you come to destroy us?"* (Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34).

Evil is far too hypersensitive to be indifferent to the challenge of the good. It knows its enemies long in advance. Let anyone come into the world, who believes in Freud, and preach: *"Blessed are the clean of heart"*; or come to those who believe in the class struggle of Communism and preach: *"If any man take your cloak, give Him also your coat"*; or come into a world of aggressiveness and violence to say: *"Blessed are the meek"*; or into a world where children are raised without a prayer or a thought of God and say: *"Suffer little children to come unto Me"*; or let him drive the capitalists into the sea, even though it restores a man to health—and see if he can have any other end than the cross. You cannot preach goodness to an evil world and expect anything less than to be crucified.

No one will waste time over trivia. No one will draw swords against weaklings. The instinct of evil is infallible; it knows its enemies. Look, then, for the hated Christ who is paid the beautiful tribute of opposition, the high compliment of hate. For

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death, you would soon be in a better state and would find peace.

Although you were taken to the third Heaven with Paul, you were not thereby insured against suffering. Jesus said: "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake." To suffer, then, remains your lot, if you mean to love Jesus and serve Him forever.

If you were but worthy to suffer something for the name of Jesus, what great glory would be in store for you, what great joy to all the saints of God, what great edification to those about you! For all men praise patience though there are few who wish to practice it.

With good reason, then, ought you to be willing to suffer a little for Christ since many suffer much more for the world.

Realize that you must lead a dying life; the more a man dies to himself, the more he begins to live unto God.

No man is fit to enjoy Heaven unless he has resigned himself to suffer hardship for Christ. Nothing is more acceptable to God, nothing more helpful for you on this earth than to suffer willingly for Christ.

If you had to make a choice, you ought to wish rather to suffer for Christ than to enjoy many consolations, for thus you would be more like Christ and more like all the saints.

Our merit and progress consist not in many pleasures and comforts but rather in enduring great afflictions and sufferings.

If, indeed, there were anything better or more useful for man's salvation than suffering, Christ would have shown it by word and example.

But He clearly exhorts the disciples who follow Him and all who wish to follow Him to carry the cross, saying: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

When, therefore, we have read and searched all that has been written, let this be the final conclusion — that through much suffering we must enter into the kingdom of God.

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if the world hates, then it is unworldly, and if it is unworldly, then it is divine, and if it is divine, then it is the channel of salvation.

Deny not your Master even under opposition. "But he that shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father Who is in Heaven" (Matthew 10:33). So long as we are hated, we are worth troubling about. The church that would give only a moral tone to secular movements, can die of its own inaction. If the pagan forces of the world left us untouched, if they did not calumniate us, seek to destroy us, set up rival claimants to the soul, it would mean that we would have lost our influence, that our touch was gone, our stars no longer shone.

Do men shake fists over the tomb of Napoleon? Do armies storm and rage against the grave of Mohammed? Do forces assault the tomb of Lenin? These men are dead. But they certainly do storm the citadel of Christ; they do rage against His Spouse; they do kill the members of His Mystical Body; they do try to stifle the young hearts that would like to breathe His name in school. Therefore Christ must be alive today in His Body, which is the Church.

The Church can still make the evil forces of the world angry. It can still inspire persecution. Therefore Christ is with us. The exhilaration of being counted a foe of evil, is the joy of honor to the good. Our heart is warmed by the tribute of enmity from those areas of life, where to be counted friends, or not to be counted at all, would be to stand condemned as salt without savor, and as feeble candles whose lights had gone out.

Few Christians may understand the metaphysics or philosophy of modern anti-religion, but deep souls can see and understand its meaning. There are forces afoot in the world that would have nothing to do with those who have ever had anything to do with God, and under a common enemy those good souls are being drawn together in the embrace of the loving God who made us.

No. Christ did not desire, entice or court opposition; neither does His Mystical Body—which is the Church. He offered love now and then, but the selfish do not want that love, and out of it comes the opposition. While the Church gives love to all, it can test the virility of its loves by the fires of resistance, that it enkindles in the breasts of all who know that Christ's love regnant spells disaster to their evil ways.

The "white robe of the fool" is a judgment on the world; it is the sign of its evil; the death-rattle of its wickedness. Because men mock, a verdict is passed on them; because the Church is martyred by evil powers, a sentence has been pronounced on those powers. Their deeds are known to be sinful by what they do to innocence.

Thus will men, who live in the world and do not know where to look for religion, finally find it in the religion which their very world crucified, and, in finding it, will find peace which the world cannot take away!

True followers of Christ, be prepared to have a world make jokes at your expense. You can hardly expect a world to be more reverent to you than it was to Our Lord: "If the world hate you, know ye, that it hath hated Me before you!" (John 15:18). When it does make fun of your Faith, its practices, abstinences, and rituals, then you are moving to a closer identity with Him Who gave us our Faith.

Nor may you repay sneer with sneer—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, an insult for an insult: "You have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you not to resist evil: but if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other! And if a man will contend with thee in judgment, and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him. And whosoever will force thee one mile, go with him other two!" (Matthew 5:38-41). We cannot fight God's battles with the weapons of Satan. Repaying jeer with jeer is not the response of a Christian, for under scorn Our Lord "answered nothing." The world gets more of its amusement from a Christian who fails to be Christian, but none from his respectful silence.

The answer of Our Lord to Herod was that Our Lord continued to be Our Lord. Dogs bay at the moon all night, but the moon gives back no snarl. It goes on shining. Shine forth in thy white robe of mockery, O Christian! One day it will be the robe of your glory!

PENANCE & REPARATION

Penance and reparation are the consequence of sin. Or again, penance and reparation are the price we have to pay for our own and other people's sin. Penance and reparation, finally, are what God requires from sinners as a condition for showing them His mercy.

In order to better understand the meaning of penance and reparation, we have to look for a moment at what happens whenever we sin. Two things happen:

First: we incur guilt before God for the self-will that caused us to sin. We become more or less separated or estranged from God, depending on the gravity of our sin.

Second: We deserve punishment for the disorder we cause by our sinful conduct. We become liable to suffering pain, again more or less pain, depending on how seriously we have done wrong.

Against this background, we can more easily see the meaning of penance and reparation.

Penance is the repentance we must make to remove the guilt, or to reinstate ourselves in God's friendship.

Reparation is the pain we must endure to make up for the harm we brought about by our self-indulgence when we sinned.

What then do penance and reparation have in common? They have this in common, that they are absolutely necessary if the justice of God is to be satisfied after we have offended the divine Majesty. They also have this in common, that God now has a right to demand more of us than He would have required had we not committed sin. The word more is basic to any correct understanding of penance and reparation.

But if penance and reparation have this in common, how do they differ? They differ, as we have seen, in the two different ways that we do wrong whenever we sin. Because we have failed in loving God, we now owe Him more love than He would have required had we not offended Him.

We did wrong by our willful love of self. So now we have to make up by our selfless love of God. This is Penance.

And because we have brought disorder into the world by our sins, we must undergo pain to undo this harm we have caused. This is reparation.

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THE THIRTEENTH STATION JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS

SEE YOUR CROSSES FOR WHAT THEY ARE & BEAR THEM PERSEVERINGLY

From among the many aspects of the Eleventh Station that might be dwelt upon, only two are to be considered here: first, the implication of finality contained in the idea of nailing; second, the nature of the cross to which the modern Christian who is in earnest about his religion must expect to be nailed. That perseverance, or at least consistency of vision and thought, will come into the treatment of both aspects is obvious. Without the assumption of perseverance, there would be little point in dealing with, or even practicing, any virtue. Here it acts as a backdrop against which the twofold theme is played out on the platform of daily experience.

Few would deny, then, that one of the chief weaknesses of our time is the spirit of experimentalism. People try a thing, and if it does not immediately answer to their need, they try something else; they do not want to be tied down. The desire to leave open a loophole of escape prompts the desire to escape, and life becomes a series of temporary ventures prematurely abandoned. Men and women are becoming increasingly reluctant to commit themselves: whether it is a question of a policy or a philosophy, a religious system or a career, the modern psyche claims the right to reverse its pledges at a moment's notice and to redirect itself along unexplored avenues of possibility.

So marriage becomes an adventure that is well worth trying; if the current partner turns out to be unsatisfactory, the sensible thing to do is to make a change. A chosen occupation becomes a trial employment of faculties that are always on the lookout for something else. Whereas, in other times, a man looked forward in his undertakings to striking roots, the modern man looks forward to pulling them up. A man today will think little of changing his job, his house, his son's school, his religion, his political allegiance, his car, and his wife — perhaps all in one year.

The present-day dislike of being pinned down shows itself unmistakably in the matter of modern entertainment: people prefer to come in and go out when they like, and so choose the continuous performance of a film rather than the single performance of a play. They prefer to hear a concert that they can switch off to the one that commands a set attendance. They would rather eat and drink informally and standing up, because to sit between two people at a dinner party would rule out the possibility of escape. They want to do their traveling by car, because it avoids being committed to the times of trains. They read digests, because they cannot face the ordeal of pursuing the whole book to the end. Always an unwillingness to go the whole way, to be bound to a course.

Against this we have Christ allowing Himself to be nailed to the Cross. He could have backed out, even then, but He did not. He was preaching a doctrine of stability, of completeness. The refusal to call the whole thing off may be called obstinacy by those whose purpose is flexible, but it represents an attitude much in evidence among the saints. If today people are slightly scornful of the stable man, charging him with a lack of imagination and initiative, it is because they are losing the sense of tradition — particularly of Christian Tradition. The man who is stable will always be useful to his contemporaries in pretty well any society, but will he be held up by them as an example to be followed?

Man tends to discredit the things he is bad at and to canonize those which come easily to him. The urge to alter our lives every few years may well be hailed by future psychologists as a sign of health; steadfastness — Is there already a faintly old-fashioned ring to the word? — will be at a discount. Fortunately, there will always be the vows of religion to attract the world's attention to the essentially connected ideals of immolation and permanence — ideals implied particularly by the Eleventh Station of the Cross.

Then comes the kind of cross to which our century is nailed. For having so long evaded the Cross, padding it out with cotton wool, man is paying the

WHY DO PENANCE & REPARATION?

If we ask, why penance and reparation, the first answer is: Because God wants it. But if we press the question: Why does God want it? Then we must say, because in His mysterious wisdom, His justice requires it. Penance and reparation are owed to God not only because I have individually sinned, but because we human beings have sinned and are sinning, in our day, on a scale never before conceived in the annals of history.

We know better than Cain after he killed his brother, Abel. We are our brother's keepers. We are mysteriously co-responsible for what other people do wrong. There is a profound sense in which all of us are somehow to do penance and make reparation, not only for our sinful misdeeds, but for the sins of our country and, indeed, for the sins of the whole human race.

We return to our question: Why penance and reparation? Because, in Christ's words, "Unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish". Is it any wonder that on Pentecost Sunday, after Peter preached his sermon, and rebuked the people for their sins, and they asked him, "what must we do," his first word to the multitude was the imperative verb, "Repent!"

Is it any wonder that Our Lady of Fatima's message to a sinful world in our day, may be summarized in the same imperative, "Do penance."

Indeed, the calamities that we have so far seen in this present century: two world wars with more casualties than in all the previous wars of history, and the threat of a nuclear holocaust that hangs over us like a tornado cloud. All of this is God's warning to do penance and reparation. Why? Because God is not mocked.

You do not offend God with impunity. You do not sin without retribution. You do not ignore the will of the Almighty and expect the Almighty to ignore what you do. What bears emphasis, however, is that this retribution is either to be paid willingly, with our penance and reparation, or will be paid unwillingly within the divine punishment.

The divine logic is simple, awfully simple, and all we have to do is learn what God is telling us. Either we do penance and reparation because we want to, or we shall suffer (against our will) the consequences of our sins in this life, and in the life to come.

But remember, this penance and reparation is to be done not only for what we have personally done wrong. It is for all the pride and lust, for all the cruelty and greed, for all the envy and laziness and gluttony of a sin-laden human family.

Lent well spent with devotion to our lady.com

penalty of being stretched upon a cross whose existence the world does not recognize. Once the reality of sin is denied, the Cross, which is the consequence of sin, has equally to be denied. Having done away with man's moral responsibility, the world quite logically does away with the idea of Christ's divine responsibility: the act of expiation becomes unnecessary, and the Cross is made void.

But although the Cross, as a Christian reality and in terms of atonement, is repudiated, human suffering goes on. Pain is with us still, and although its existence is as freely admitted as ever — and indeed attended to as never before — it is attributed to causes unconnected with the Fall, is subjected to investigations unconnected with the Redemption, is given hope of relief unconnected with the Resurrection.

Abandon the Christian concept of suffering as a mixture of punishment and opportunity, and you are reduced to proposing new explanations of human tendencies, new remedies for human ills. When acts that used to be expected to rouse a sense of guilt are accounted for by inherited compulsions, by immaturity, by environment, the sufferer who used to merit the reward of cross-bearing has to be content with being labeled an arrested affectionate, socially starved, a victim of under-privilege, a case of abnormal mental sensitivity. Our troubles can be sympathized with because they relate to melancholy or fear or anxiety about money, but they may not be seen in the context of Christ's Cross. We are nailed, inescapably, to a sacrificial wood that knows no sacrifice, to an altar whose foundations are buried, not in the common clay of our formation, but in the unmined depths of our subconscious.

The trouble with tinkering with the subconscious is that, in getting down into it, all sorts of controls have to be released that are uncommonly difficult to regain when the investigations and adjustments are over. And this is not only a matter affecting self-discipline; it is also a matter affecting faith. Consent given to the process that proposes the removal of compulsions and inhibitions may well prove to be a consent that removes other things besides — a case of taking off the head while taking off the hat, of throwing away the baby with the bath water.

Morals, faith, and spirituality go together, and in order to recognize the Cross for what it is, and, still more, to profit by it, there is need of all three. Determination to endure is not enough, and any system or science that leaves out of account any one part of the essential Christian ideal is bound to fall short of the truth. Certainly the man who is led to believe that God is a father-image, that Hell is a fear reflex, that the Church has arisen out of civilization's Oedipus complex, that a religious vocation is the result of an Electra projection, will not readily take to the idea that the Cross of Christ is the instrument of man's salvation. It needs faith to see the sense of suffering, and it needs at least a measure of spirituality to accept it personally as something sanctifying.

To imagine that a man can reach the state of perfect well-being by a process of eliminating, one by one, the causes of his inner conflict is only less unlikely than to imagine that he can do so without God. Man is a center of conflict, and the conflict is the Cross. The more he tries to evade the conflict, the more he lays himself open to further conflicts and further crosses. In his preoccupation about ridding himself of the causes of conflict, he becomes subject to dread and doubt: he fears the outcome of the search. His dread of suffering will be his suffering; his feverish avoidance of the Cross will be his cross — a cross that, as such, he refuses to acknowledge.

Whereas, to a Christian, the element of fear is an accepted element of the Cross, to the man who rationalizes every instinct from conscience onward, fear is just another one of nature's flaws — like loneliness and depression, jealousy and discouragement, and all the other horrors to which man is liable — and must be made good by the judicious study of the mind.

Against all this business of rationalization, we have the Passion telling us what is true suffering: pain and fear of more pain. The Cross is the Cross, and there is no substitute for it. Christ not only took it up for our sakes, but for our sakes was nailed down upon it.

SEVEN LAST WORDS

FIFTH PHRASE: "I thirst!" (John 19:28)

The fifth phrase of words of Christ echoes Isaiah 55:1, "Come, all you who thirst." Whether you acknowledge it or not, everyone has a thirst for God. Everyone desires something deeper and seeks someone higher.

As Our Lord hangs on the cross, He says that it works two ways. God is also on a quest for our souls: He is the Hound of Heaven. We tend to desire God, but we want proof before we will commit to a God who seems so far away. We fail to realize that it we who have distanced ourselves from God and not He who remains distant from us, for He seeks us like a shepherd seeks a lost sheep.

There are many people who hate God and His Church that can't seem ever break away from its influence. These people should be prayed for because they are like St. Paul before his conversion. They may do great evil but their refusal to abandon God can be the source of their eventual return. Despite the reasons they give for hating the Church, they most likely realize that problem is really within themselves and does not have to do with God. The consciousness of their sins creates a vacuum that only grace can fill. God thirsts for the souls of even the worst sinners and while no one can deserve God, everyone can receive Him.

SIXTH PHRASE: "It is consummated!" (John 19:30)

The expression used by Our Lord can be found three places in Scripture. It is found in Genesis after creation, in Revelation at the end of time, and here on the cross. It means that what was done is now perfected and for Christ it marks the end of His hour. During the wedding feast at Cana Jesus first mentioned His hour. He told his mother that his hour had not come; it was not time to begin his mission. For His hour, which lasted three years, it would be a time of mortification, suffering and death. For us it has to be the same thing.

Many people are frustrated in their lives because they have rejected the cross. Instead of pursuing non-attachment in their lives, they fill them worldly substitutes. Instead of embracing the mysteries of religion, they embrace murder mysteries on television. They criticize people and religion for the very things they despise in themselves. They are consumed with themselves, yet defeated because self-perfection can't exist without self-denial. We must actively use our "hour" to improve our lives as Christians if we ever expect to find happiness. It is only in surrendering ourselves as Christ did that we become receptive to His grace.

DAILY ROSARY MEDITATION

Haggling Over The Cross!

We all know what Our Lord says about the Cross and there can no arguing over it: "And Jesus said to all: 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me!'" (Luke 9:23) ... "And he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth Me, is not worthy of Me!" (Matthew 10:38). As much as we would like a different way of following Christ, there is no other way and never will be! The Cross is the Way to Heaven, the Way of the Cross is the key to Heaven. Throw away the Cross and you throw away the key! That's as tough as it gets and the Cross is tough—but then, only the 'tough' ones make it to Heaven—"And you shall be hated by all men for My Name's sake. But he that shall endure unto the end, he shall be saved!" (Mark 13:13). Those words "endure to the end" say a lot, as does the phrase: "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away!" (Matthew 11:12). All of this is "tough talk" and this "tough talk" speaks of a "tough walk"—the walk to our Calvary, carrying our own Cross!

Let's face it—we are pretty 'cheap' when it comes to the Cross! Like the world around us—whose mentality we have imbued more or less—we want the maximum rewards for the minimum effort! We want to streamline the Cross, produce a luxurious saloon model of the Cross, one that lets you carry the Cross in comfort! We want a microwaved Cross! A "fast-track" Cross! An "express lane" Cross! Yet our idea of the Cross differs drastically from God's idea of the Cross—that is because God has a different evaluation of Heaven to the value we have placed on Heaven. Thus we "haggle over the price of Heaven"—which in turn means "haggling over the size of the Cross" which is what buys Heaven.

Just as God says: "For My thoughts are not your thoughts: nor your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the Heavens are exalted above the Earth, so are My ways exalted above your ways, and My thoughts above your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9)—we could well paraphrase that and say: "My thoughts about the Cross are not your thoughts: nor is your Way of the Cross, My Way of the Cross, saith the Lord. For as the Heavens are exalted above the Earth, so is My Way of the Cross exalted above your Way of the Cross, and My thoughts of the Cross above your thoughts of the Cross."

The level or load of the Cross, which we are prepared to carry, is very low indeed, compared to the level and load that God expects from us—that is why, of the few souls that are saved, the vast majority end up having to go the 'weight-room' and 'sauna' of Purgatory, to sweat it out for a few decades or centuries longer! Witness the sad plight of the teenage girl of Fatima, Amelia, a friend of Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta—Our Lady said that she would have to stay in Purgatory until the end of the world! Heaven's ways are not what we would like them to be!

To the Venerable Mary of Agreda, Our Lady addresses these very 'unpopular' words—thankfully Our Lady never worries about where she finds herself in the "Popularity Rankings"!

"Thou knowest that not all who are called, are chosen. Many there are who wish to follow Christ and very few who truly dispose themselves to imitate Him; for as soon as they feel the sufferings of the Cross they cast it aside. Laborious exertions are very painful and averse to human nature according to the flesh. On this account there are so many among mortals, who seek the flesh and the continual indulgence of its pleasures. They ardently seek honors and fly from injuries: they strive after riches, and despise poverty; they long after pleasure and dread mortification. All

CHEERFUL CROSS

When the Church looks into the life of someone who has been proposed for beatification and canonization, it has to be ensured that during that person's lifetime there was the practice of heroic virtue, and that this was proved over a period of time. Such virtue has had to be expressed faithfully, exactly, and without letting up when the person was not in the mood. The Church says that when any person perseveres in his God-given state of life without rebellion, self-pity, escape, eccentricity, fussiness, vanity, or a desire to attract personal attention, this can only mean that the grace of God is at work in the soul to an extraordinary degree.

Now, notice what the Church does not demand as a sign of the person's holiness. There is no talk of ecstasies and self-torture. The Church is not always impressed by exciting things like people going up in the air when they pray, but it is always impressed when it finds that someone has been living an ordinary commonplace life divinely. While at Nazareth, Our Lord lived the life of the place divinely, and that is exactly what the saints have been doing ever since.

So you see how the quiet, humble virtues are a more certain proof of holiness than the ones that make headlines. Two things especially a soul must possess if holiness is to be proved, and they are both rather ordinary things: balance and cheerfulness. Balance means not only taking things calmly, but also being able to choose between what is important and what is not. Balance is such a good sign because our first parents had it before the Fall, and holiness brings the soul as nearly as possible to that original state.

The Fall unbalanced man and upset the right order in life. The right order is for the body to obey the spirit and for the spirit to obey God, but Original Sin meant that the body rebelled against the spirit and the spirit rebelled against God. Now, saints, because they live in God and God lives in them, get the order right. So, of course, they are balanced.

That joy is another sign of holiness is also fairly obvious. Not only does God love a cheerful giver, as the Scripture especially tells us (2 Corinthians 9:7), but people love cheerful givers, too — and rightly so. Where there is peace in Christ, there is bound to be joy of heart. How could a person who trusted completely in the mercy of God, who looked forward to Heaven, who saw the whole world and all the people in it as coming from the love of God, not be cheerful?

So if you want to be holy and give glory to God, try not to be sad. Sadness is no mark of sanctity. Cross-bearing is a mark of sanctity — so long as it is done cheerfully with Christ.

these are enemies of the Cross of Christ and with dreadful aversion they fly from it.

“Another deceit has spread through the world: many imagine that they are following Christ their Master, though they neither suffer affliction, nor engage in any exertion or labor. They are content with avoiding boldness in committing sins, and place all their perfection in a certain prudence, or hollow self-love, which prevents them from denying anything to their will and from practicing any virtues at the cost of their flesh.

“They would easily escape this deception, if they would consider that my Son, although He well could do it, He chose not a life of softness and ease for the flesh, but one full of labors and pains; for He judged His instructions to be incomplete and insufficient, if He failed to teach them how to overcome the demon, the flesh and their own self. He wished to inculcate, that this magnificent victory is gained by the Cross, by labors, penances, mortifications and the acceptance of contempt—all of which are the trademarks and evidences of true love and the special watchwords of the predestined.

“By such standards must thou measure the value of suffering, which the worldly will not understand. Since they are unworthy of heavenly knowledge, they despise it in proportion to their ignorance. Rejoice and congratulate thyself in thy sufferings, and whenever the Almighty deigns to send thee any, hasten to meet it and welcome it as one of his blessings and pledges of his glorious love.

“My most holy Son and myself are trying to find, among those who have arrived at the Way of the Cross, some soul, whom We can instruct systematically in this divine science and whom We can withdraw from the worldly and diabolical wisdom, in which the sons of Adam, with blind stubbornness, are rejecting the salutary discipline of sufferings.

*“If thou wishest to be our disciple, then enter into this school, in which alone is taught the Doctrine of the Cross and the manner of reaching true peace and veritable delights. With this wisdom, the earthly love of sensible pleasures and riches is not compatible; nor the vain ostentation and pomp, which fascinates the bleary-eyed worldlings, who are so covetous of passing honors, and so full of ignorant admiration for costly grandeur” (Our Lady to Venerable Mary of Agreda, *The Mystical City of God*).*