

Preston, Sunday 6th April 2025

Passion Sunday

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

We entered yesterday evening in Passiontide. The statues are veiled, the *gloria patri* is no longer said, soon, we will walk alongside Our Lord and following Our Lady, towards the Calvary. We are offered ten more days before the anniversary of our Redemption. We didn't deserve anything, and still, Jesus wanted to save us. Because he knows about our weaknesses, our sins and our unworthiness, He offered Himself as a Victim for us, in a painful sacrifice to his Father.

He could have done it with a single move of his Will, and everything was forgiven and forgotten. But He choose to repair the offense in a divine but human way, associating the human race which committed the insult and offense to his majesty, to its own redemption. The fate of the whole humanity became suspended to one single word of the Lord, and, associated with Him in a mysterious but beautiful way, a single word of our Lady, *fiat*. This word Jesus said it externally during his agony in the garden of olives, but all His life he prepared himself to say it, and Our Lady said it before His conception in her virginal womb.

The Gospels we read this morning and yesterday give us a closer look upon the power of Jesus' words. Saint Francis de Sales, during a sermon he gave for Passion Sunday in 1622, gave us a few directions to help us to receive these words of the Lord.

“A word is accepted or rejected for three reasons: because of the person who speaks it, because of the word that is spoken, because of those who hear it. For this word to be honoured and accepted, the one who is speaking it must be a good man, a virtuous man, one worthy of being believed. Otherwise, rather than being accepted, it will be rejected, despised¹. Further, what is said must be good and true. Finally, those who hear it must be good, prepared to receive it; if not, it will be neither accepted, honoured, nor kept².”

If you heard carefully the words of our saints, you may easily understand that the pharisees of the Gospel were not following these recommendations. They had a bad opinion upon the Lord, they were listening only to themselves and their so-called interpretation of the law, and because of that, their hearts were hardened, and closed to hear the first clear affirmation of God's divinity: “Before Abraham was, I am³.”

¹ Cf. St Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God*, Book VIII, chapter 1 and chapter 5.

² St Francis de Sales, Sermon for Passion Sunday, 13th March 1622.

³ Jn., 8, 58.

On the contrary, contemplate Our Lady, and conclude your Lenten journey in Her company. Only Her will lead you with peace and understanding through the painful road of Calvary. Our fate has been released from the eternal decree because of Her *fiat*. Therefore, why not trusting Her even more for the rest of the path? This single word of Her was enough to launch the most admirable movement of Love and Mercy from God, who being our Creator, became also our Redeemer.

That fiat of Mary's is the sovereign act of her life. It brings Our Lady into the accomplishment of the divine mysteries. From now on the mystery of the Incarnation cannot unfold itself without her: through her, God is about to accomplish His great mystery, the mystery which redounds "unto the praise of the glory of His grace"⁴, the mystery of Christ, namely, Christ in us. When God decides to give Himself to creatures, He will do it through Mary, the intermediary between us and the divine life. The operations of union, of love, the diffusion of grace, will be performed by God through Mary.

Mary knew it. A prophetic light showed her the whole mystery of her Son, and she surrendered herself to it unreservedly. "She knows, she feels, she sees to what God is drawing, calling, raising her, and she enters into this divine state full of grace, of light, and of desire to serve God in this high ministry"^{5, 6}

All her life, She only had one desire: fulfil God's Word, and see it fulfilled by those who became Her children. You now can understand how opposite is She to the poor and blind pharisees of the Gospel. She will give Jesus to her true and devoted children. "Jesus Christ is the fruit of devotion to Mary", says St. Louis Mary Grignion de Montfort. Our Lady endured a terrible martyrdom all along her life because she knew all the prophecies and understood that Her Son would fulfil them to the last word, the last coma. She suffered them another time when she was the privileged and sorrowful witness of the Passion and Death of Her beloved Son.

"Our Lady entered into God's designs, and accepted beforehand the sacrifice that would become a gushing fount of life. Although her heart was pierced, she longed, like Jesus, for the hour which was to give a "long-lived seed" to her Son and to herself, and restore to God His lost children. [...]

"She stood," and like a sacrificing priest, she offered her victim freely, voluntarily. No creature can have any idea of her pain in those terrible hours, a pain made extreme by the ineffable tenderness of her heart, by the very fineness of her physical constitution, and, above all, by her spiritual insight; for she was

⁴ Eph. 1, 6.

⁵ Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle, *Vie de Jésus*, chp. 15.

⁶ Fr. MV Bernadot, *Our Lady in our life.*, The Newman Press, 1950, Chp. 1, p. 5.

both a mother and bound to her Son by a unique privilege of perfection and of holiness. [...]

She was implementing the consent spoken at the Annunciation, confirmed at the Presentation, renewed all her life long: she was giving her Son for us⁷.”

Why not coming to Her and spend this last decade of days with Her, to learn from Her and with Her how to accomplish faithfully and without groaning the penances and difficulties of our duties, prayers and sacrifices? She stood, and desire us to stand with Her.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

⁷ Fr. MV Bernadot, Our Lady in our life., The Newman Press, 1950, Chp. 1, p. 11-12.