

Reflections on the Way of the Cross



Drawn from the writings of St. Claude de la Colombiere

It is a great illusion to want to do everything you hear and everything you read in books, as well as to overburden yourself with many devotions. You need to read little and study Jesus Crucified very much. . . . The best meditation book on the Passion is the Passion itself, which you must read reflecting on the suffering and the love of Jesus Christ (Letters 100 and 138).

I. Jesus is condemned to death.

I beg the Lord very humbly to nourish and inflame your good desires; to sustain you in the precious humiliations He sends you; to give you the grace to imitate the silence which Jesus Christ practiced on like occasions; to let you know the value of His crosses, so that you will love them, and they become your delight, as they were the delight of all the saints (*Letter 75*).

II. Jesus takes up his cross

The knowledge and experience of my misery is a great grace from God . . . Even in this I submit myself to His will and I am disposed to spend my entire life in this tedious combat if that is what He wants. Enough for me that His grace not permit me to succumb (*Spiritual Retreats*).

III. Jesus falls the first time

God does not send you trials which you are unable to bear. This is pure fantasy that passes through your mind. If I thought that you really felt so, I would never forgive you this mistrust and affront you offer to the wisdom and goodness of our Lord. You cannot get it firmly enough in your mind that it is He principally who does everything in us,

except commit our sins, and that we should have no regard for our faults or our weaknesses, but look to Him alone for everything (*Letter 116*).

Your temptations would distress me if I did not know that they were in you in spite of yourself, and that the demon is the sole author of them. It is enough for me, my dear daughter, if you always hold to a great confidence in God and a sincere wish to do His will (*Letter 91*).

IV. Jesus meets his Mother

Turning to Mary to ask of her the grace to place my heart in the same disposition as the Heart of Jesus, I noticed that her heart was in that disposition perfectly. I desire that henceforth my heart be only in the hearts of Jesus and Mary, or that the hearts of Jesus and Mary be in mine, so that they will communicate their movements to it, so that it will not act, will not be stirred, except in conformity with the impression it receives from these hearts (*Spiritual Retreats*).

Our Lady having received me so readily, presented me, I thought, to her Son who out of consideration for her, looked fixedly at me and opened His arms to me as though I had been the most innocent of men (*Spiritual Retreats*).

V. Jesus is helped by Simon

O my most lovable Savior, what should I do, alas, if You were not my strength? But being so, how do You assure me of it, and what would I not do for your glory? "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me." You are everywhere in me and I in You. Therefore, wherever I am, whatever danger, whatever enemy threatens me, I have my strength within me. This thought can scatter all my worries in a moment (*Spiritual Retreats*).

VI. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

It's strange. God repays us promptly and generously for all we do for Him, yet we hardly care about pleasing only Him. In contrast, the world repays us absolutely nothing even though we wear ourselves out for it. Yet, we are so concerned about satisfying the world and letting it be the judge of all that we do. If the Lord demanded from us what we so readily do for the world, His yoke would truly be unbearable (*Reflection 16*).

VII. Jesus falls the second time

Our Lord is witness of your struggles. He will be your strength and consolation. Cast yourself frequently into His arms like a poor child who would have been lost a thousand times if He had not the goodness to sustain you. Beware of losing patience and giving up the work. The day will come when you will praise God for having been so well tried (*Letter 133*).

VIII. Jesus meets the women

Sacred Heart of Jesus, teach me perfect forgetfulness of self, since that is the only way by which one can find entrance into You. As all that I shall do in the future shall be Yours, grant that I do nothing that will be unworthy of You. Teach me what I ought to do to come to the purity of Your love, the desire of which you have breathed into me (*Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart*).

IX. Jesus falls the third time

When, because of the strength of your temptations, you should fall, rise again with courage. Ask God for pardon, hope in Him despite your weakness, accept the humiliation of it with courage and detest its malice with all your soul (*Letter 98*).

X. Jesus is stripped of His garments

Besides perceiving in you a foundation wonderfully apt for holiness, I cannot help but admire the gentleness and the strength with which our Lord calls and draws you to it. You have resisted long enough, Madame. The time to surrender has come. It is no use; you will have no rest until you have satisfied God, who very plainly wishes to be Master of your heart (*Letter 109*).

XI. Jesus is nailed to the Cross

I am firmly convinced that men cannot satisfy God's justice even for the slightest fault. I should always be saying to myself: No, you have not done enough. It is not in your power to cancel your sins. That can be done only by God's blood. To pay the penalty, there is need of an eternity—or the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Well, this Blood and these sufferings are in our own hands (*Spiritual Retreats*).

XII. Jesus dies on the cross

Let's pause for a moment to look at Jesus Crucified. He not only shows no sign of sadness or impatience, but, lowering His eyes and His head, He accepts everything with unchanging meekness and profound humility. His sentiments on the Cross are that of a humiliated man, of a sinner doing penance, of a man afflicted by God's anger. He is not irritated by the cruelty of his executioners; rather, He seems to approve of it through His silence. He does not insult his enemies, but accepts their insults in such a way as to make us think that He deserves them. He seems to me like a criminal convinced of the enormity of his crimes and tormented with remorse; a despised man who is judged unworthy to live and is more humiliated by his misdeeds than by the disgrace to which he is exposed. It is truly an attitude that baffles me and should confound all our intolerance and all our pride (*Discourse 12*).

Turning my thought to what makes death difficult, that is, past sins and pains to come, a course was at once presented to my mind which I accepted with all my heart and with great consolation of soul. It was that at this last moment, I would make a bouquet of all the sins of which I am conscious, known and unknown, and cast it at the feet of our Savior, there to be consumed by the fire of His mercy. The greater their number, the more

enormous they appear, the more readily will I offer them to be consumed, because what I would be asking would be all the more worthy of that mercy (*Spiritual Retreats*).

XIII. Jesus is taken down from the Cross

I am resolved so to abandon myself to God who is always in me and in whom I am and live, that I will in no wise be anxious about my behavior, inwardly or outwardly, reposing softly in His arms without fear of temptation or illusion, or prosperity, or adversity, or my evil inclinations, or even my faults, hoping that He will guide all by His goodness and infinite wisdom, with the result that all will redound to His glory (*Spiritual Retreats*).

XIV. Jesus is buried

The confidence inspired by innocence and purity of life does not, it seems to me, give very much glory to God. For is that all that the mercy of our God can do, save a holy soul that has never offended Him? It is certain that of all kinds of confidence that which most honors the Lord is the confidence of a notorious sinner who is so convinced of God's infinite mercy that all his sins seem to him as an atom in the presence of this mercy. . . . Yes, my God, Your will must be done: that is the one thing necessary. Whether I die early or late, of one sickness or another, completely purified or not, makes little difference, if only I die at the moment, of the sickness, and in that state of perfection which will please our Lord. My daughter, throw yourself blindly into the arms of God, and cling to the hope that He will not destroy a soul who has no confidence except in Him and who delivers herself to Him without reserve (*Letter 72*).

XV. The Resurrection

St. Thomas affirms that the joy of the holy ones on this earth is like a flower of that bliss that the blessed enjoy in heaven; and as in the flower we don't have merely the hope of fruit, so in the consolations that God gives us we have not only the hope of Paradise but, so to speak, the beginning of it (*Reflection 1*).

Prayer:

All powerful God, who holds the earth aloft in the universe, who formed the heavens as the throne of your glory, it would not be difficult nor, I dare say, less glorious for you to give my soul the same stability. Make me resistant to all temptations, impervious to all the assaults of my enemies. Bind me to You with indissoluble knots; unite my will firmly to Yours so that they become but one will, that mine become right, holy, and above all constant and unchangeable like Yours.

O my God, grant that I die in the womb of your Church, outside of which there is no salvation; that I breathe my last in the arms of the Cross from which gushes the spring of our salvation, in the Heart of Jesus Crucified, in Him who is salvation and redemption. And since I cannot live except through You, let me live only for You. Finally, let me die praising You and loving You, and, if possible, even of love for You (*Discourse 56*).