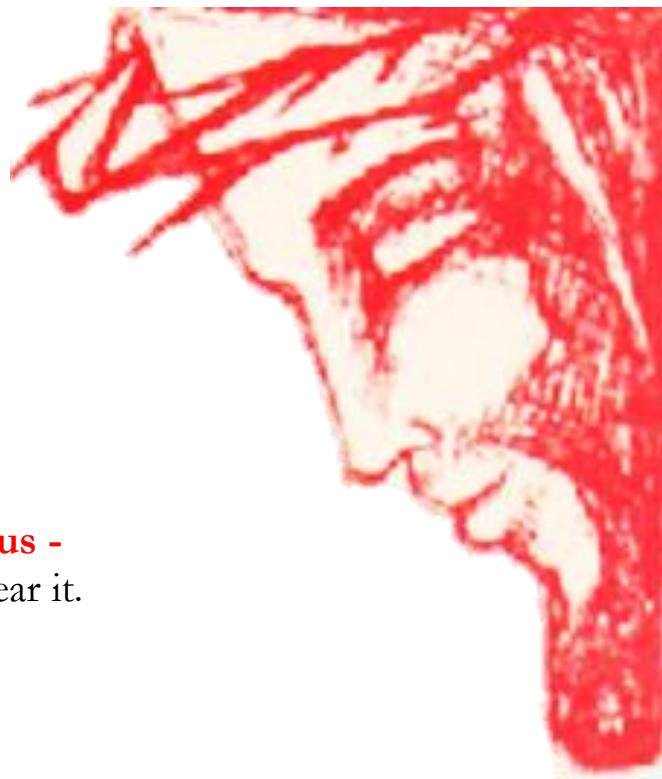


The Crown of Thorns

*Iniquity
Caused by our offenses*

During this Season of Lent,
we would like to meditate
- **on the crowning of Jesus -**
and the cause, why He had to bear it.



In the Gospel according to John, we read:

“The soldiers wove a crown out of thorns and placed it on his head, and they came to him and said, “Hail, King of the Jews!” (Jn 19:2-3).

What did this really mean for Jesus? This is the kind of torture the Jews invented uniquely for Jesus.

There is no mention of such torture before the crucifixion in any historical source. On the Shroud of Turin, we can see numerous bloodstains on Jesus' skull. These were caused by the thorns from the crown piercing blood vessels of His head. The crown of thorns was shaped into a bonnet which covered Jesus' entire head. Surgeons counted thirteen wounds from the thorns on the forehead and another twenty wounds at the back of His head. They suppose that there were about fifty wounds altogether. Due to the network of nerve endings and blood vessels in the scalp, the crown of thorns must have caused enormous pain and bleeding.

“If we consider that there are more than 140 pain-sensitive areas per one square centimeter of scalp tissue, we can imagine what terrible suffering Jesus bore during this torture of the crowning with thorns” wrote Coppini, Director of the Institute of Anatomy at the University in Bologna. Investigation has confirmed that the blood traces correspond to the anatomy of the blood vessels of the human head. This is more evidence of the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin, since the circulatory system was understood and described in 1593.

*“Into your hands I commend my spirit;
you will redeem me,
O Lord,
O faithful God.”*

Ps 31:6

How did Blessed Alphonse Marie meditate on the crown of thorns?

She says, “The best way on how to prepare for meditation is to stand in God’s presence and talk as a child.

“My Jesus, I am impelled to meditate on this mystery, but, how can I handle it without your extraordinary grace, help, and support? Look, how poor and weak I am! Say to my heart just one word.

Show me Your will. If only I could engrave deep into my heart my resolutions. I am not able to do it; you must do it instead of me, my Jesus. Have mercy on me!”

Then, she meditated on the cruel coronation with all its circumstances and the reason Jesus endured this cruel coronation. She said to her Divine Spouse, “*What made you suffer this pain?*”



He answered, “My child, the pride and stubbornness caused that.” Then, she saw the Redeemer’s face, how terrible and dreadfully He was mistreated by the despised soul and its consequences. At the same time she saw the frightening face of *Ecce Homo* in his suffering.

She cried when she saw her Redeemer suffering so pitifully, “*O my Divine Spouse, my Love, let me know how I have offended you, because I know I have pressed these thorns deeper into your head.*”

She saw the many futile and useless thoughts of many people who deal in their thoughts only with the vanities of the world and thus multiply the suffering of the Divine Redeemer so terribly.

What she saw in this and in further visions and what she was taught she must occasionally say to others, therefore also to us at this time of the pandemic. Every time she also heard the means by which the passions are to be suppressed.

(From Prayers of Blessed Alphonse Marie, p. 9)

Let us consider on the suffering of Jesus.

God often tests us, and lets us languish in misery and in drought; but one must not be unfaithful to God, rather continue on the way.

Such a person should not be troubled, but should trustfully continue on the way and put their misery in the arms of God as a child, without tormenting or plaguing themselves. If we torture ourselves about it, we look out for ourselves, which happens out of self-will, pride, and selfishness. God is pleased when we thank Him for everything, even for “aridity” which is in us, because this too is useful. When we bear this suffering in surrender to His will, God will give us more and more love and graces. He will teach us the inner humility, self-denial, self-knowledge, and the knowledge of God.

In inner dryness, this is achieved, if we are not only completely devoted to ourselves, but thank God for it, because we deserve nothing better. This is an important lesson!

If everyone could recognize how precious inner suffering is! For only in the inner suffering we can make progress in virtue and perfection. This is tough, but it is the truth. We cannot make any greater progress than through the inner suffering and tepidity. There we get to know ourselves, and also God, and that everything comes from Him. This is the best school for the inner life.

What does Jesus being with thorns, teaches us?

Evangelist John says, “The soldiers wove a crown out of thorns and placed it on his head, and they came to him and said, “Hail, King of the Jews!” (Jn 19:2-3) Before our eyes is an interesting picture. Jesus’ head is covered with a crown, which denotes an honor and also suffering. Yes, life is like that. Whoever receives the honor, must reckon with the fact that he also receives pain. Jesus’ crown is a burden of us all, a burden of our iniquities. With this, Jesus teaches us a thorough lesson: to rule is to *serve and, in addition, to bear the burden of the whole world*. We walk with Him, therefore when His head was covered with thorns, also our head will be covered with thorns.

Do not expect anything else for your service but thorns, wounds after nails, wounds after scourging and then, a cross, because the disciple must walk the same path as His Master did.

One of the visions Jesus offered St. Catherine of Siena a crown of gold and precious stones and a crown of thorns. She had choice to take one. As a true follower, she chose the crown of thorns.

One of the visions Jesus told Blessed Alphonse Marie, “Now, I am giving you the sign of a true Bride of Christ” and He put on her finger a beautiful diamond ring. On it was written, “big and hard suffering, tenacity, perseverance

and generosity." Then, He took the crown of thorns from His head and placed it on her head. Picking up the big black cross He said, "This is the cross on which I suffered and died. This cross becomes your salvation. You, also, will hang on, suffer and die on it. My daughter, what was salvation for me will, also, be for you. You have to suffer ridicule, shame, contempt and disfavor. They will treat you like a fool and shout at you. You will have to endure physical sufferings and nailed on the cross. Take this cross now and lie down on it. It is your destiny, it is your share." (From the Visions, October 21, 1849)

It is a big difference to hear about enduring the suffering of the saints and personally accepting it. Do not hesitate for long. If Jesus considers us worthy to put the crown of thorns on our heads, do not defend ourselves and put it on our head. Thus, we become like Jesus Christ.

Let us remember Jesus' words in Gethsemane, "*Not what I will but what you will.*" (Mk 14:36) Thus, Jesus is giving us another lesson. Do not be afraid to fall under the cross, He teaches us to rise and continue to walk to Calvary of our lives.

Let us be encouraged on the way of the cross by the following event. In 1966, a priest from Molokai Island came to Pope Paul VI for an audience. He said to the Holy Father, "*On my leaving, in some house, I visited a leper woman. The leprosy exterminated both her eyes. I saw only two bloody holes. Moreover, the disease seriously damaged her hands and feet. When the leper woman learned she was talking to a priest who was going to visit a Pope, she said, "I am satisfied with my condition and I am happy that I knew Jesus Christ. I am happy that I may send a greeting to the Pope and the gift of the merits of my sufferings.*" Then, Pope Paul VI exclaimed, "*What is the mystery of vitality of the Church? Where does she draw her strength and ability to survive any time? I am convinced that the Church lives from love and the sufferings of her children.*"

Holy Father Francis – Peter of our time, also knows why at meetings with believers prefers the sick and young people; the sick, to suffer for Christ and the Church. The young people, that they may consecrate themselves to a single and great certainty, the crucified Love, which alone sanctifies the Church and makes the world more beautiful. Therefore, he calls, "*Do not be afraid to open your heart to Christ!*"

When we realize how much Christ suffered when He was crowned with thorns, fell and rose under the cross for all of us, we must take courage, fill with the strength of faith and rise from our sins, leave the paths of filth, and to resist our passion and doubts.

Jesus Christ endured every single suffering, so He gave us an example. The Lost Son, aware of his faults, said, "*Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.*" (Lk 15:21).

For Jesus' crowning with thorns, let us have the courage to love and raise our brothers and sisters in the Church and in the world. Let us forget ourselves and remember Jesus and the Church. Let us have the courage to join the Church even when they despise her and faithfully perform your Christian duties.

With Blessed Alphonse Marie let us learn to pray intently:

“My Jesus, I will not leave until You have compassion on me. Even though I do not deserve to be heard, do not look on my unworthiness. O my Jesus, I desire to love You, but to prove it, let me feel and know Your love and Your mercy. Teach me, teach me, my Jesus! “

What a lesson! How great the grace that obtains a person, who with child-like simplicity turns to God and does not leave until He has compassion on him. How happy is that person!!

She continues, “When the thoughts of pride, vanity, and selfishness arise in your mind, remember Jesus’ suffering. And if still they follow you, do not stop calling and sighing: *“Behold, my Divine Spouse, how the thoughts of pride, stubbornness, and selfishness penetrate me. Do not admit, my Love, to renew Your suffering. O my Jesus, have mercy on me and help me to know Your will! See, my Divine Spouse, I do not know myself at all.*

O Mary, my dear Mother, intercede for me that I may know all of my afflictions. Jesus, I will not cease to ask You, and if you do not hear me, then you must hear your Mother, whom I will not leave until I know your holy will. I want to give up everything and give up everything that displeases You. I want to belong to You and not to me anymore.” (From Prayers of Blessed Alphonse Marie, p. 10).

Do not hesitate, even in this difficult time of the pandemic, to give thanks to the Triune God for His care of us and to believe His plans for us. Let us be opened to welcome Jesus into our lives. Let us accept Him as our King; King of our renewed lives, who does not reign with a might but with a service. Let us thank Him that he endured condemnation, disgrace and crowning with thorns to redeem us, and show us the great price we have in His eyes and how He loves us. Let us entrust ourselves to the strong intercession of the saints and the blessed, especially Blessed Alphonse Marie, and let us ask for everyone a blessed journey through this year’s Lent.