

Friday's Gospel: The Sacred Heart of Jesus (Year B)

Gospel for Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi, feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (B), and commentary.

Gospel (*Jn 19:31-37*)

Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified

with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe.

For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.” And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.”

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Commentary

The Passion of our Lord is over. His body, subjected to the cruelest tortures, is now a corpse.

But although his Heart has stopped beating, the demonstrations of his Love have not ended. There is still one last sign: blood and water, perhaps the two main symbols of life. And Jesus doesn't want to keep them to himself: he wanted to die precisely to give us life.

The Fathers of the Church have written many beautiful reflections on Christ's open side that allows us to contemplate his Heart. Saint Augustine will say that, just as Eve is born from the side of Adam, so the Church is born from the side of Christ. Many saints of the first centuries also see in this blood and water a clear indication of the source from which the sacraments flow. And in our own day and age, Saint Faustina told us that Jesus himself wanted those two rays to be captured in the image of Divine Mercy, one red and the other white, representing the

blood and water poured from his Heart.

When we refer to a person's heart we think of their affections, their sentiments, their way of loving. Saint Josemaría said: "When Scared Scripture refers to the heart, it does not refer to some fleeting sentiment of joy or tears. By heart it means the whole person who, as we see in Jesus himself, directs both soul and body to what is seen as good: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (*Christ Is Passing By*, no. 164).

This last phrase can be an encouragement to be surprised again by God's Love: *where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*.

Therefore, as we contemplate Christ crucified, giving his life for us, with his opened side and pierced Heart, we can state without fear of being wrong that *we are God's treasure*.

It is very significant that *the one who testifies* to this is Saint John, the same one who leaned on Jesus' chest at the Last Supper. The youthful apostle had a unique opportunity to sense our Lord's beating Heart, which at that culminating moment that He had so longed for, would beat with special strength. Saint John, we could say, had "taken the pulse" of God's Love and witnessed its last palpitation, giving testimony that Jesus lived and died to give us life.

"We have known and believed in the love that God has for us" (1 Jn 4:16). The apostle John uses two verbs here: *know* and *believe*. They are two clues that can help us take full advantage of today's Solemnity, so valued by the popular piety of the Church. Saint John knows that he is transmitting something sublime, impossible to put into words, but still he tries to do his best. Hence he stresses so frequently in his letters,

in every possible way, that God is Love: “He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth—that you also may believe” (*Jn 19:35*).

The deepest need of our own heart is to come to know the Sacred Heart of Jesus and believe in his Love. Let us go to the intercession of our Lady and Saint John, whose hearts beat in unison with Christ’s Heart, asking that we may never cease to be amazed by this mystery: that we are the treasure of the Heart of God.

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