
Dear Friends:

Below is taken from a book called: "Meditation on the Passion" by Rev. Reginald Walsh, O.P. first published 1946. (with an imprimatur).



ON THE ROAD TO GETHSEMANI

III

JESUS ENTERS THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANI

Gethsemani was about a mile and a half distant from the supper-room. It was a bright and cheering little spot in the midst of the dreary, sepulchral valley of Josaphat. The place called Gethsemani, where latterly Jesus had several times passed the night with His disciples, was a large garden, surrounded by a hedge, and containing only some fruit-trees and flowers - this place was sometimes used as a pleasure ground, and sometimes as a place of retirement for prayer.

The Garden of Olives was separated by a road from that of Gethsemani, and was open, surrounded only by an earthen wall, and smaller than the Garden of Gethsemani. There were caverns, terraces, and many olive-trees to be seen in this garden, and it was easy to find there a suitable spot for prayer and meditation. It was to the wildest part that Jesus went to pray. This was the place our Lord chose to begin His Passion.

And why did He wish His Passion to begin in this garden, and with prayer? The fall of our first Parents had taken place in a garden, under the trees of Eden; and therefore the reparation of this fall was also to be made in a garden. That question of Almighty God, "Adam, where art thou?" that had once resounded through the garden, demanding satisfaction from the first Adam, had hitherto remained unanswered. No one appeared to offer the required expiation. But now our Lord and Saviour, the second Adam, comes and offers Himself to make full satisfaction, saying: «Behold I come.»

In the second place, it was from Mount Olivet that our Lord was to make His Ascension to the throne of His glory, and in the valley of Josaphat He will hereafter judge mankind; how fitting, therefore, that His Passion, too, should begin there.

Lastly, no more majestic, worthy introduction to the Passion can be imagined than *prayer*. There was not a single important undertaking in the public life of our Lord that He did not begin with prayer; how much more, then, His blessed and saving Passion! The prayer on Mount Olivet is the gate and vestibule of the sanctuary of His Passion, the first station of the Passion itself. Jesus well knew that this very prayer was to cost Him unspeakable anguish and the sacrifice of His life. But, He does not waver-no hesitation. He does not forbear to make it. Oh, the Jove of Jesus for us all. He will never fail us. What He has undertaken to do for us He will do. The darkness was gathering round Him, was even then like the darkness of death. "My soul," He says, "is sorrowful even unto death." He began to fear and to be very heavy. He could hardly endure the misery which by His own decree even then began to fall on Him.

Shall I not offer generously to stand by our Lord always and in all things? Is He not a King to live for, a King to die for? O God, I love Thee.

COLLOQUY.- O my Divine Master, my Lord and my God, hear me through that undying love of Thy Sacred human Heart. O Jesus, grant me, I conjure Thee, a heart capable of loving Thee. Whom should I love in Heaven or on earth if not Thee? O my God I do love Thee, and my only regret is that I cannot every moment love Thee more. Strengthen me, good Jesus, to live, labor, suffer, and die for Thee. O Lord Jesus, blot out, I implore Thee, my multiplied iniquities, which I detest from my heart because they have grieved Thee. Grant me pardon, absolution, and full remission of all my sins - let them not stand between me and Thee. I want to love Thee with all my heart. O Jesus, open wide Thy Heart and let me rest therein. Take, Lord Jesus, everything, let me live to Thee alone. O my Mother, I have need of thee.

XII. - THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN

(*Matt. xxvi. 30-40*)

1st Prelude: *History*. - "Then Jesus came into a country place which is called Gethsemani, and said to His disciples:" Sit you here till I go yonder and pray. And taking Peter, James, and John, He began to grow sorrowful and to be sad. Then He

saith to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death; stay you here, and watch with Me. And going a little further, He fell upon His face, praying and saying: My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”

2nd Prelude: *Composition of Place.*- A garden on the western slope of Olivet, *close to* the brook Cedron that flows through the valley of Josaphat. Olive-trees all about. The moon at the full, but the darkness beneath the trees impenetrable. Our Lord prostrate there with eight of the Apostles near the garden gate. Peter, James, and John a stone's-throw from the scene of the Agony.

3rd Prelude: Ask what I want. - To know the Heart of love - the Heart of Jesus. Its sorrow unto death, fear, heaviness, agony, and all for me! Our Lord's words are the words of Truth itself; hence we understand them literally when speaking of Himself, He says, “sorrowful unto death.” Ah, my dear Lord Jesus, give me light and grace to realize the anguish and agony of Thy loving Heart, and how great a share I had in Thy sufferings. O Mother of Jesus, I have need of thee. Make me feel as thou hast felt. Make my soul to glow and melt with the love of Christ my Lord.

Points: I. The Sacred Agony of Jesus.

II. “My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, *not* as I will, but as Thou wilt.”

III. Like to us in all things.

I

THE SACRED AGONY OF JESUS

See the persons-listen *to* the words-consider the actions. Reflect! How the Divinity hides itself. How much Jesus suffers in this mystery, how much He wishes *to* suffer. And all is for me, for my sins.

Contemplate the thoughtful and compassionate care of Jesus for His disciples. On entering the Garden He said *to* eight of them: “Sit you here till I go yonder and pray.” He knows that their weakness could not bear the sight of His infirmity; they would be overmuch scandalized and shaken. In spite of His own trouble, He is full of solicitude for them. Dear Lord, help me to learn this lesson, never *to* allow personal sorrow or trouble to render me selfish or deaden *my* sympathy for others. I

see that sorrow cannot conquer either hope, or love, or compassion in the Heart of Jesus. “Many waters cannot quench charity: neither can floods drown it” (*Cant.* viii).

Jesus exhorts the eight to pray lest they should enter into temptation, then going on a little further with Peter, James, and John, He entered the Garden of Olives. No words can describe the sorrow which then oppressed Jesus' soul, for the time of the trial was near. See the distress of the three as John asks Jesus how it is that He, who had hitherto always consoled them, could now be weighed down with fear and sorrow. Jesus answers: “My soul is sorrowful even unto death.” In their presence Jesus' Passion has already begun the agony of heart. “He began to fear and to be heavy; to grow sorrowful and to be sad.”

It was from the three chosen witnesses that the Evangelists learned what they wrote down for us. Peter, James, and John told what their eyes had seen and their ears had heard. For in the moonlight they could see that the paleness of death had overspread the Sacred Face of Jesus, and that a look of inexpressible distress and anguish had overcast the beauty of His countenance. The three were dismayed, horror-stricken and scandalized; they saw His tears, His strength apparently gone from His wasted body, His faltering footsteps, His trembling limbs as He turned to say with a choked and broken voice, “My soul is sorrowful unto death.” The heavy night of desolation came down upon His loving Heart. O Jesus, sorrowful unto death for me, penetrate my soul with the truth of Thy word: “Blessed are they that mourn.”

Jesus speaks: “Stay you here and watch with Me; pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” Note how sorrow and sadness and fear in all their intensity can never turn our Lord's soul one hair's-breadth from perfect love. Jesus' sorrow is a sorrow unto death. A sorrow strong enough to break His heart and cause death. But it will not conquer His charity, which is strong as death and stronger. And the one sole motive or cause *why* He is in this extremity of anguish is because He loved me and delivered Himself up for me.”

When the winds and the waves were raging on the lake of Galilee one word from Him commanded them all. So it is now. The passion of fear is strong; sadness is strong; sorrow is strong; but these passions, though they may rise to their topmost height, shall never conquer the charity in Jesus' Heart. The voice of His love will ever be dominant and supreme over them. “What I have undertaken to do for them I will do.” Ah, Lord Jesus, strengthen me to be true to Thee till death, to stand by Thee under all circumstances. O Mother, I have need of thee.

“Pray,” Jesus says, “lest ye enter into temptation.” Note He does not tell us to pray not to be tempted. For our life must be a warfare, and we must be soldiers, and must fight a good fight. But oh! how earnestly He desires that when Satan comes to tempt, and so to allure us away from our God, our Lord, our Creator, our loving Father and most loving and merciful Redeemer, we shall not listen to the temptation, Satan's foul treason, or go over to the side of Satan, and agree with him, and make ourselves his subjects and slaves.

St. Ignatius teaches us in contemplation to study not only the outward person, but also the inward thoughts; we are allowed to try in our poor way to find out, if we can, what are the chief objects that are presented to our Lord's soul to awaken fear and sadness and heaviness of heart.

Spiritual writers answer: (1) Fear is awakened by His coming death and the terrible circumstances of His death. (2) Oppression and most weary tediousness, by the sight of all the opposition which He shall encounter from men and devils in His work of redeeming those He loves so much. (3) Sorrow unto death is caused by the sight of sin; sin past, sin present, sin to come; the offence, the displeasure, the dishonor, the ingratitude, the treason, and treachery, and malice, all heaped upon Himself by sin.

During the Agony in the Garden our Lord anticipated all the coming agony of His Passion. He allowed His human soul to feel in all its intensity each detail of the unspeakable suffering that was now close at hand. Hitherto it had indeed been distinctly present to Him, but now it was not only permitted, but commanded to take possession of His own soul. Now it was a mortal fear, resulting from a clear, vivid realization of all that He had to endure. When darkness invades our souls, we should remember that none is like the deep, black darkness that spread over the Sacred Soul of Jesus.

Where should we have gone in our hours of weakness had there been no Gethsemani! What consolation is wanting to us now that we see the Mighty God-Man stricken with fear, sickening like us at the sight of failure, treachery, ingratitude. How practical, how generous is Christ's love for us! “All that I *can* do I *will* do for them” was His motto through life. And so when His hour came, it was not what befitted His Majesty, but what would help us most, that determined the way in which He would meet suffering and death. To be like us in all things, this was His rule from first to last: that having shown Himself like us, He might win us to be like Him, ready to say in the hour of trial: “Abba, Father, all things are possible to Thee, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, Thy will be done.”

Colloquy.- With the suffering Heart of Jesus. O good Jesus! how great is Thy love for me! How unselfish Thy love! What sorrow and agony Thou didst endure, and all for me, to help me, teach me, console me, to draw me to Thyself! Can I ever forget Thee? Can I ever love Thee enough? Ah, dear Jesus, I do love Thee, and I want to love Thee with an ever increasing love. Deep in Thy Sacred Heart let me abide.

“Nearer, my God, to Thee, nearer to Thee; Even though it be a cross that raiseth me!”

Mother of Jesus, my Mother, make me true to thy Divine Son, Jesus.

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