

## **'I CAME TO BRING FIRE'** **PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION APRIL 5<sup>th</sup>**



“...Then he released Barabbas to them, but after he had Jesus scourged, he handed him over to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus inside the praetorium and gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped off his clothes and threw a scarlet military cloak about him.

Weaving a crown out of thorns, they placed it on his head, and a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They spat upon him and took the reed and kept striking him on the head.

And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, and led him off to crucify him...

And when they came to a place called Golgotha —which means Place of the Skull.... After they had crucified him, they divided his garments by casting lots; then they sat down and kept watch over him there.

And they placed over his head the written charge against him: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.

Two revolutionaries were crucified with him, one on his right and the other on his left. Those passing by reviled him, shaking their heads and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, if you are the Son of God, and come down from the cross!”

Likewise the chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him and said, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. So he is the king of Israel! Let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he wants him. For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” The revolutionaries who were crucified with him also kept abusing him in the same way.

From noon onward, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Some of the bystanders who heard it said, “This one is calling for Elijah.” Immediately one of them ran to get a sponge; he soaked it in wine, and putting it on a reed, gave it to him to drink. But the rest said, “Wait, let us see if Elijah comes

to save him.” But Jesus cried out again in a loud voice and gave up his spirit.”  
(Matthew 26:14-27:66)

## **I. AFTER HE HAD JESUS SCOURGED:**

**Petition:** O Jesus, divine lover, who in showing us your love spared no suffering. Help me to understand that everything you endured in your passion was *for me and for my salvation*; for attracting and drawing me toward your divine love, the Source that heals all sins. Help me to live by faith so that, as Saint Paul, I may live from your love: *“The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”* (Ga 2:20)

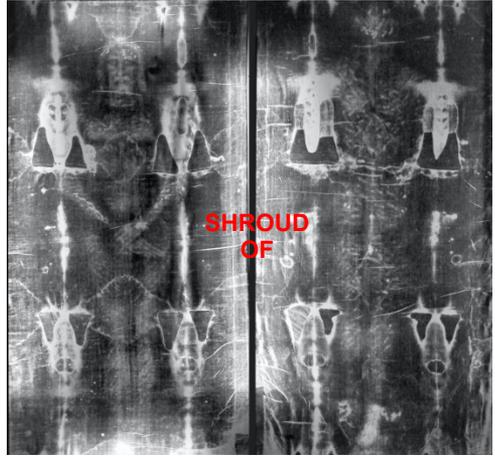
When we look to the Passion and Crucifixion of Jesus it is very important to keep this in mind: ***“One and the same person —this must be said over and over again— is truly the Son of God and truly the son of man. He is God in virtue of the fact that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He is man in virtue of the fact that the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.”*** (Leo the Great, Pope)

Try for a moment to stop and fix your eyes on the scene that is described so briefly and laconically in Matthew 27:26-31 (see blue text of the Gospel).

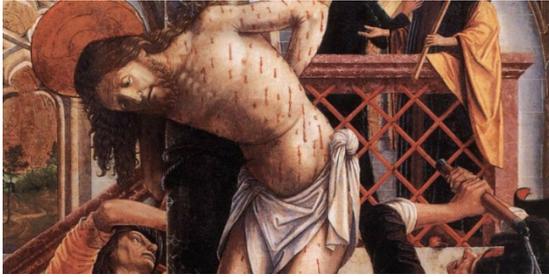
We have a better understanding of the sequence of these events from the Gospel of Saint John. Pilate was trying to free Jesus from being crucified, because he knew that he was innocent of any serious crime and also because he hated the Jews, and didn’t want to accomplish their goal of hatred toward Jesus in executing him as a great criminal by crucifixion.

And because Pilate wanted to free Jesus from the crucifixion, he gave him to the roman soldiers to chastise him physically, so that when the Jewish people would see him really wounded and almost destroyed, they might have some compassion and be done with their hatred, thereby allowing Pilate to stop the process of crucifixion.

These soldiers were professional killers, mercenaries who hated the Jews; they didn’t have any scruples or consideration for anyone, neither respect nor qualms. And now they have been given a man who proclaims himself Messiah and Son of God, so that they might scourge, mock, ridicule,... destroy him without killing him, so the Jews might be satisfied when they saw him and so stop the crucifixion process. This is when the scourging, the crowning of



thorns, the beating, mocking, spitting, hitting, insulting, and laughing at Jesus occurred.



And after the physical and psychological punishment they brought him up to a public place to make a choice between Jesus or a professional murderer, a criminal and thief call Barabbas. We know who they chose.

I invite you to gaze on the scene. You can use your imagination and go there as a spectator. What kind of men they were, what they said, what they did to Jesus.

And you can see how Jesus reacted to all that they did to Him; *“Learn from me; for I am meek and humble in heart.”* (Mt 11:29) *He emptied himself, He humbled himself and he made himself obedient until death, even death on a cross.* (cf. Phil 2:8-9) Look at his patience, his love, his humility, his compassion for others; all for love of you, all for giving us an example that we might follow in his steps.



He is God, the divine person, the Son of God, the Omnipotent, the Creator, Light of Light, true God from true God; *“in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things subsist.”* (Col 1:16-17)

And now think about the words of Jesus: *“Who sees me sees the Father”* (Jn 14:9)

## **II. THEY CRUCIFIED HIM:**

**Petition:** God Crucified! God the Creator crucified by His love for us! The Almighty crucified by his love for me! O My God you love us, and because you loved us, you delivered yourself up to sorrows, and disgraces, and to a death more cruel than any man ever endured in this world. Please, dear Lord, never let me doubt your love, especially when I may sin.

Think for a moment about the two iron nails that pierced Jesus’ wrists and the single long nail his feet, as he was nailed to the wood of the cross. Try to look at the executioner with the hammer that hit the iron nail that broke through his hand at the level of the wrist, among the eight carpal bones, so that the hand wouldn’t tear when holding the body in a vertical position. And now the

other hand, pierced right in the place where the nerve that gives sensibility to the fingers passes. And after that gaze on the same professional work accomplished on the feet. Can we imagine the pain of Jesus? And after that when He was well nailed to the cross see them lift him up, in order to be exposed to the public. See Him

### **III. WHEN I SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS: (Isaac Watt)**

When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of Christ my God!  
All the vain things that charm me  
most,  
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His  
feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled  
down!  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature  
mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

**Fr. Armando Marsal, DCJM.**

