

FIFTEEN MEDITATIONS ON THE SACRED PASSION OF ST. BRIDGET OF SWEDEN

St. Bridget, Princess of Sweden (†1373), a mystic, founded the Order of the Most Holy Saviour (the Brigittines). She received many visions and locutions from Jesus. These were recorded and later became the subjects of artwork. She yearned to know how many wounds Christ suffered in His Sacred Passion. In one vision, our Blessed Lord revealed to her that He had suffered 5,480 wounds. He implored faithful to make reparation for these wounds by saying each day of the year one of fifteen prayers that He revealed to her. The fifteen are to be prayed in order and then their cycle is repeated twenty-four times until the year has ended. Each of these prayers is to be closed by one *Pater* and one *Ave*. The product of fifteen and 365 is 5,475, to which one must add the Five Sacred Wounds that are adored in separate devotions.

Most of these wounds must have been inflicted by the Scourging at the Pillar, although only one of the fifteen prescribed prayers alludes to the Scourging. The prayers are meditations on the Passion. They consider the wounds and other humiliations endured by our Saviour. Why is the number of prayers fifteen? It is perhaps because, in mediæval tradition, our Blessed Lord suffered physical pain on fifteen occasions, as follows:

1. Annas's servant's unjust slap across the Face for supposed insolence.
2. The buffets and blows of Caiphas's servants for blasphemy.
3. Caiphas's servants' slaps across the veiled Holy Face of Jesus to mock Him.
4. The Scourging at the Pillar.
5. The Crowning with Thorns.
6. The soldiers' striking on the Sacred Head of Jesus with a reed.
7. The crippling Shoulder Wound of Jesus in the Carrying of the Cross.
8. The wounds sustained by Jesus on His elbows and knees at His first fall while carrying the Cross.
9. The wounds sustained on His forearms and shins in His second fall.
10. The wounds sustained even on His Sacred Face in His third fall, when He fell prostrate onto the ground.
11. The Wound of the Left Foot, inflicted by a nail.
12. The Wound of the Right Foot inflicted by the same nail.
13. The Wound of the Left Hand, inflicted by a nail.

14. The Wound of the Right Hand, inflicted by a nail.
15. The blow of the lance into the Sacred Side of Jesus, a physical wound but felt only spiritually.

The kiss of Judas and the spitting on His Sacred Face by the servants of Caiphaz and also by the soldiers in the courtyard are not blows in the physical sense.

This devotion can be adapted for use in Passiontide. One method is to pray the fifteen petitions in order so that one is prayed on each of fifteen consecutive hours on Passion Friday and/or on Good Friday, beginning, for example, at seven o'clock in the morning and ending at nine o'clock at night. This institutes a parallel to the Clock of the Passion and overlaps with it. It could be called St. Bridget's Clock of the Passion. An easier method is to pray one petition each day from the eve of Passion Sunday to and including Holy Saturday, a total of fifteen days which anticipates Passiontide and embraces it.

First Prayer

[Dedication: The servant of Annas, father-in-law of Caiphaz, the High Priest, slaps the face of Jesus for supposed insolence.]

O Jesus Christ!, Eternal Sweetness to those who love Thee!, Joy surpassing all joy and all desire!, Salvation and hope of all sinners!, Who hast proved that Thou hast no greater desire than to live among men, even assuming human nature in the fulness of time for the love of us, recall all the sufferings Thou hast endured from the instant of Thy conception, and especially during Thy Sacred Passion, as this was decreed and ordained from all eternity in the divine plan.

Remember, O Lord, that, during the Last Supper with Thy disciples, having washed their feet, Thou gavest them Thy Most Precious Body and Blood, and while, at the same time, Thou didst sweetly console them, Thou didst foretell them Thy coming Passion.

Remember the sadness and bitterness which Thou didst experience in Thy Soul as Thou Thyself bore witness, saying, "My Soul is sorrowful even unto death".

Remember all the fear, anguish and pain that Thou didst suffer in Thy delicate Body before the torment of the Crucifixion, when, after having prayed three times, being bathed in a sweat of blood, Thou wast betrayed by Judas, Thy disciple; arrested by the people of a nation Thou hadst chosen and raised up; accused by false witnesses; and, in the flower of Thy youth, unjustly condemned by three judges during the solemn Paschal season.

Remember that Thou wast despoiled of Thy garments and clothed in those of derision; that Thy Face and Eyes were veiled; that Thou wast buffeted, crowned with thorns, a reed placed in Thy Hands; that Thou was crushed with blows and overwhelmed with affronts and outrages.

In memory of all these pains and sufferings which Thou didst endure before Thy Passion on the Cross, grant me, before my death, true contrition, a sincere and entire confession, worthy satisfaction, and the remission of all my sins. Amen.

Pater. Ave.

Second Prayer

[Dedication: the servants of Caiphaz, the High Priest, strike and buffet the Holy Face of Jesus for supposed blasphemy.]

O Jesus!, true Liberty of angels and Paradise of delights!, remember the honour and sadness which Thou didst endure when Thine enemies, like furious lions, surrounded Thee, and by much spitting and innumerable insults, blows, lacerations and other unheard-of cruelties, afflicted Thee at their will. In consideration of these torments and insulting words, I beseech Thee, O my Saviour, to deliver me from all mine enemies, visible and invisible, and to conduct me, under Thy especial protection, to the perfection of eternal salvation. Amen.

Pater. Ave.

Third Prayer

[Dedication: having blindfolded Jesus, the servants of Caiphaz spit upon His Sacred Face and slap him, exclaiming, Prophecy to us: who struck you?]

O Jesus!, Creator of Heaven and earth, Whom nothing can encompass or contain, Thou Who dost enfold and hold all under Thy loving power, remember the very bitter pain Thou didst suffer when, by blow after blow with large, blunt nails, the Jews pinned Thy Sacred Hands and Feet to the Cross, and not finding Thee in a pitiable enough state to satisfy their rage, they enlarged Thy Wounds, augmenting one torment by another, and with indescribable cruelty, they stretched Thy sacred Body on the Cross and pulled Thee from all sides, thus grievously dislocating Thy holy Limbs.

Pater. Ave.

Fourth Prayer

[Dedication: Pilate had Jesus scourged at the Pillar,
During which time, our Lord prayed for His tormentors.]

O Jesus!, Heavenly Physician, raised aloft on the Holy Cross that our wounds might be healed by Thine, remember the bruises which Thou didst suffer, and the weakness of all Thy Members, which were so distended that never was there any pain like unto Thine. From the crown of Thy Head to the soles of Thy Feet, there was not one patch of Thy Sacred Body that was not in torment and yet, forgetting all Thy sufferings, Thou didst pray unceasingly to Thy Heavenly Father for Thine enemies, pleading, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”. Through this great mercy, and in consideration of this terrible suffering, grant that the remembrance of Thy most bitter Passion may effect in us perfect contrition and the remission of all our sins. Amen.

Pater. Ave.

Fifth Prayer

[Dedication: the soldiers in the courtyard platted a crown of thorns
and pressed it upon the Holy Head of Jesus our Lord.]

O Jesus!, Mirror of eternal splendour!, remember the sadness which Thou didst experience when, pondering in the light of Thy divinity the predestination of those who would be saved by the merits of Thy Sacred Passion, Thou didst consider at the same time the great multitude of reprobates who would be damned for their sins, and Thou didst grieve bitterly over those hopeless lost and unfortunate sinners.

O Sweet Jesus, I beseech Thee that, at the hour of my death, Thou wilt show me mercy in consideration of this abyss of compassion and pity, and especially through the kindness which Thou didst display to the good thief when Thou didst say to him, “This day, thou shalt be with me in Paradise”. Amen.

Pater. Ave.

Sixth Prayer

[Dedication: the Roman soldiers placed a reed in His Left Hand to serve as His sceptre and then, taking it away from Him, struck Him upon the Head with it.]

O Jesus!, beloved and most desirable King!, remember the grief Thou didst suffer when, naked and treated like a common criminal, Thou was fastened to and raised aloft on the Cross. At that time, all Thy friends and relatives abandoned Thee except for Thy beloved mother, who remained close to Thee during Thine agony, and whom Thou didst entrust to Thy faithful disciple, when Thou didst say to Mary, “Woman, behold thy son!” and to St. John, “Son, behold thy mother!”. I beseech Thee, O my Saviour, by the sword of sorrow that pierced the soul of Thy holy mother, to have compassion on me in all my afflictions and tribulations, both corporal and spiritual, and to assist me in all my trials, and especially at the hour of my death.

Pater. Ave.

Seventh Prayer

[Dedication: They placed the beam of the Cross upon the shoulders of our Blessed Lord, and its heavy weight gave unto Him a most grievously shoulder wound.]

O Jesus!, inexhaustible fountain of compassion!, Who, in a profound gesture of love, said from the Cross, “I thirst!, suffered in thirst for the salvation of mankind: I beseech Thee, O my Saviour, to inflame in our hearts the desire to seek perfection in all our deeds, and to extinguish in us all worldliness and the concupiscence of the flesh. Amen.

Pater. Ave.

Eighth Prayer

[Dedication: At the first fall while carrying the Cross, the Elbows and Knees of our Lord are cut and bruised.]

O Jesus!, sweetness of hearts and delight of the spirit!, by the bitterness of the vinegar and gall which Thou didst taste on the Holy Cross for love of us, grant us the grace worthily to receive Thy Sacred Body and Blood during this life and at the hour of death, that they may be a salve to and a consolation for our souls. Amen.

Pater. Ave.

Ninth Prayer

[Dedication: At the second fall while carrying His Cross, our Lord’s Forearms and Shins are wounded and bruised.]

O Jesus!, royal virtue and joy of the mind!, deign graciously to recall the pain Thou didst endure when, immersed in an ocean of bitterness at the approach of death,

Thou wert insulted and rebuked by the Jews, and didst cry out in a loud voice that Thou hadst been abandoned by our Heavenly Father, exclaiming, “My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?”. Through this anguish, I beseech Thee, O my Saviour, not to abandon me in the terrors and the pains of my death. Amen.

Pater. Ave.

Tenth Prayer

[Dedication: At His third fall while carrying the beam of the Holy Cross, even our Lord’s Sacred Face is wounded and bruised by His great fall to the ground.]

O Jesus, Who art the beginning and the end of all things, and their life and its virtue, remember that, for our sake, Thou wert plunged into an abyss of suffering from the soles of Thy Feet to the crown of Thy Head. In consideration of the enormity of Thine afflictions, teach me, through pure love, to keep Thy commandments, the way of which is wide and easy for those who love Thee. Amen.

Eleventh Prayer

[Dedication: At Calvary, the executioners laid Jesus upon the bed of the cross, and they drove a nail through His Left Foot and into the its wood.]

O Jesus!, deep chasm of mercy, I beseech Thee, in memory of Thy most Sacred Wounds, which penetrated to the very marrow of Thy bones and to the depth of Thy being, to draw me away from sin, for I am a miserable evildoer who is overwhelmed by mine offences, and to hide me from Thy Face, which is justly provoked against me. Hide me in Thy Wounds, until Thine anger and just indignation have passed away. Amen.

Pater. Ave.

Twelfth Prayer

[Dedication: The executioners drove the same nail into his Right Foot so that both His Feet were affixed to the Cross by the same one.]

O Jesus! Mirror of Truth! Symbol of Unity! Link of Charity! Remember the multitude of wounds with which Thou wert covered from head to foot. Remember how Thy Sacred Body was torn and how it was reddened by the spilling of Thine adorable Blood. O great and universal pain which Thou didst suffer in Thy virginal flesh for love of us! Sweetest Jesus!: what is there that Thou couldst have done for us that Thou hast not done? By the faithful remembrance of Thy most

Sacred Passion, may the fruit of Thy sufferings be renewed in my soul, and may Thy love increase in my heart each day, until I behold Thee in eternity. Thou art the treasury of every real good and every heartfelt joy, the which I entreat Thee to grant me, O sweetest Jesus, in Heaven. Amen.

Pater. Ave.

Thirteenth Prayer

[Dedication: The executioners nail our Blessed Lord's Left Hand to the Holy Cross.]

O Jesus! Strong Lion! Immortal and invincible King! Remember the pain which Thou didst endure when all Thy strength, both physical and ghostly, was entirely exhausted. Thou didst bow Thy Sacred Head, saying, "It is consummated!". Through this anguish and grief, I beseech Thee, Lord Jesus, to have mercy on me at the hour of my death, when my mind will be greatly troubled, and my soul will suffer anguish. Amen.

Pater. Ave.

Fourteenth Prayer

[Dedication: The executioners nail Jesus' Right Hand to the Holy Cross.]

O Jesus! Only Son of the eternal Father! Splendour and Figure of His Substance! Remember the simple and humble commitment Thou didst make of Thy Soul to Thine Eternal Father, saying, "Father, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit!". Then, with Thy Body rent and Thy Sacred Heart broken, and the bowels of Thy mercy open to redeem us, Thou didst expire. [Pause here and genuflect or bow.] By this precious death, I entreat Thee, O King of All Saints, comfort me and help me to resist the world, the flesh and the devil, so that, being dead to this world, I may live unto Thee alone. I beseech Thee that, at the hour of my death, Thou wilt receive me into Thy Kingdom as a pilgrim and an exile who hast returned to Thee. Amen.

Pater. Ave.

Fifteenth Prayer

[Dedication: The soldier called Longinus drives a lance into the Sacred Side of our Blessed Lord, and blood and water gush forth from this Wound.]

O Jesus!, true and fruitful Vine! Remember the abundant gushing forth of Blood which Thou didst so generously shed from Thy Sacred Body, flowing, as it did, like juice from a winepress. When a soldier pierced Thy Sacred Side with a lance, blood and water issued forth until there was not left a single drop in Thy virginal Body; and, finally, as if Thy delicate Body were a bundle of myrrh which had arisen to the top of the Cross, it was destroyed, its very substance having withered, and the marrow of its bones having dried up. Through this bitter Passion, and through the outpouring of Thy Precious Blood, I beseech Thee, O sweet Jesus, to receive me when I am in death's agony. Amen.

Pater. Ave.

Collect

O sweet Jesus! Pierce my heart, so that my tears of penitence and love may be my bread day and night. May I be converted entirely to Thee; may my heart become Thy perpetual habitation; may my conversation be pleasing in Thy sight; and may the end of my life be so praiseworthy that I may merit Heaven and, abiding there with Thy saints, may I praise Thee forever. Amen.