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We pick up this evening with the Last Supper and Our Lord's Passion. Much of this comes from Gueranger's writings on Holy Week in his great work, *The Liturgical Year*.

Jesus is in the supper chamber, where ether Paschal lamb is to be eaten. All the apostles are with him; Judas is there, also, but his crime is not known to the rest. Jesus approaches the table, on which the lamb is served. His disciples stand around Him. The ceremonies prescribed by God to Moses are religiously observed. At the beginning of the repast, Jesus speaks these words to His apostles: "With great desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you, before I suffer." In saying this, He does not imply that the Pasch of this year is intrinsically better than those that have preceded it; but that it is dearer to Him, inasmuch as it is to give rise to the institution of the new Pasch, which He has prepared for mankind, and which He is now going to give them as His last gift; for, as St. John says, having loved His own, who were in the world, He loved them unto the end.

During His discussion with them, Jesus, reading the hearts of all men, utters words that cause great consternation among the disciples: "Amen, I say to you, that one of you is about to betray me - he that dips his hand with me in the dish, he shall betray me." His sadness is enough to soften any heart. Judas, who knows the Master's goodness, feels that they imply a merciful pardon, if only he would ask. No, his avarice has enslaved his soul. Judas does not yield, but remains there until the hour comes for betrayal. Thus, the august mystery, which is on the point of being celebrated, is to be insulted by his presence, the first Eucharistic sacrilege!

They then enjoy a feast, seated two by two on would-be couches around the table. Jesus shares with them words of sorrow, even as He sits between the two whom He had sent early in the morning to prepare the place, representing faith and love. After this time, He rises, removes His upper garment, girds Himself as a servant with a towel, pours water into a basin, and prepares to wash the feet of the guests. It was the custom in the east to wash one's feet before taking part in a feast; it was considered as the very extreme of hospitality when the master of the house himself did this service to his guest. Jesus is about to regale them with a divine banquet; He wishes to treat them with every possible mark of welcome and attention. But in this, as in every other action of his, there is a fount of instruction. He would teach us, by what He is now doing, how great is the purity wherewith we should approach the holy Table. "He that is washed needs not but to wash his feet," as though He would say, "the holiness of this Table is such that those who come to it should not only be free from grievous sins, but they should moreover strive to cleanse their souls from those lesser faults which come from contact with the world, and are like the dust that covers the feet of one that walks on the highway."

It is with Peter, the future head of the Church, that He begins. There is a protest, but he is obliged to yield. The others receive the same mark of love, with Jesus coming to each of them in turn to wash their feet. Judas is not excepted from this; he has just received a 2nd warning from his merciful Master. Jesus, addressing Himself to all, said to them, "you are clean, but not all," but this has no effect. Having finished washing the feet of the 12, He resumes His place, side by side with John.

Then begins the Lord's true Supper. As he consecrates the bread, and they take it and eat, Jesus is now not only with them, but in them. This sacred mystery is not only the most holy of the Sacraments, but moreover is a true sacrifice, and sacrifice requires the shedding of blood. Therefore, He does likewise with the cup. They all partake of the cup, receiving it from Him.

When it comes to Judas, he too partakes of it, but he drinks his own damnation, as he ate his own judgment when he received the Bread of Life. Jesus, however, mercifully offers the traitor another grace, by saying, as He gives the cup to His disciples, “the hand of him that betrayed me is with me on the table.” Peter, having heard frequently of this crime, seems determined to find out who the traitor is. Not daring to ask himself, though, he makes a sign to John, who is on the other side, begging him to put the question to the Master. “He to whom I shall reach the bread dipped,” and then He gave it to Judas. One more grace offered and refused, for St. John then adds, “and after the morsel, satan entered into him.” After this, he leaves the room to perpetrate his crime.

After, and in addition to, the institution of the Most Holy Eucharist, is also the institution of a new priesthood. How could He say, “except you eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you,” unless he resolved to establish a ministry upon earth whereby He would renew, even to the end of time, the great mystery He thus commands us to receive? He begins it today, with the 12 being the first to partake of it, but observe what He says to them, “Do this in remembrance of me.” By these words He gives them the obligation, and hence the power to change bread into His body and wine into His blood, and this sublime power shall be perpetuated in the Church by Holy Orders unto the end of the world. Jesus will continue to operate, by the ministry of mortal and sinful men, the mystery of the Last Supper. By thus enriching His Church with the one and perpetual sacrifice, He also gives us the means of abiding in Him, for he gives us, as He promised, the bread of heaven. Thus we keep today the anniversary of both the Holy Eucharist and the Holy Priesthood, which are inextricably tied together for all time.

Our Savior’s washing the feet of His disciples before permitting them to partake of His divine mystery conveys an instruction to us. He tells them they are clean, but not all; there are some who render themselves guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord. God forbid we should ever be of that number! Mortal sin, and the affection for it, would change the Bread of Life into a deadly poison for our souls. Respect for the holiness of God should make us shudder at the thought of receiving Him in the state of mortal sin. Even venial sins should be dealt with, as the Lord says, “he that is washed needs not but to wash his feet,” the feet being that connected to the earth, to earthly carnal attachments which leads us to the brink of sin.

The Passion has begun, for Judas has commenced his work of betrayal. Meanwhile, the apostles, forgetting the troubles coming, dispute again about who is the greatest, forgetting also that Jesus made Peter the rock upon which to build His Church, even washing his feet first. On the other hand, John’s affectionate familiarity with Jesus during supper made some argue that he who was most loved would be most honored. Jesus puts an end to this, reminding them that he who is greatest must serve, and then turning to Peter, tells him that satan has desired to have him, but that He has prayed for him that he does not fail, and being converted, would confirm his brethren. The Upper Room Discourse follows, with Jesus expressing words of unity and love of them all, even when they fail, as Peter will when he denies the Master, for presumption comes from pride, which almost always results in a fall.

As has been His routine every evening, He departs with the disciples from Jerusalem, resting in the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane. His human nature experiences what may seem (SEEM) to be a suspension of the beatitude which results from its union with Divinity, and His soul is overcome with grief. His humanity will be interiorly supported, even to the last moment of His Passion, but it must bear everything that it is possible for it to bear. His sadness is so intense that even the presence of His disciples is unsupportable, so he leaves

them, taking only the 3 who had been witness to His glorious Transfiguration. He leaves even them, though, going to a grotto a stone's throw away, which still exists to this day. While He prays, sweat of blood flows from his body and bathes the ground. This is not a swoon but is an agony of suffering. God sends help via angels, treating Jesus as man; His humanity, exhausted as it is, is to receive no other sensible aid than this, which tradition holds to be Gabriel.

His conduct in the Garden was a lesson of humble prayer, conformity to God's will, and patience under suffering. In the words of St. Ambrose, "The Lord took my griefs on Him that He might share His joys with me." He rises, taking upon himself the sins of the whole world, even of those whose ingratitude would make His sacrifice useless, every pain that body and soul can suffer. He accepts all this at the very time when He seems to be left to only His human nature. The power of Divinity, which is in Him, supports Him, but it does not prevent Him from feeling every suffering. The blood He leaves as He rises from the ground is the 1st blood shedding of His passion. He returns back and forth two more times, being abandoned by even the 3 closest to Him, whom He had asked to watch near Him.

Judas led the soldiers into the garden, betraying the Master with a kiss. His fear of the soldiers was greater than the desire to throw himself at His feet and ask for pardon. The servants of the high priest, though, could not touch Him yet without permission. A single word from Him cast them prostrate upon the ground, though He allowed them to rise and take Him into custody, only directing that the others be allowed to go their way. He permits Himself to be led, while the others run away in fear.

They led Him back along the same road He used every day that week, along the same path on which He made His triumphal entry only a few days ago, even throwing Him into the water of the Cedron as they passed the bridge. It is night, and the people of Jerusalem do not know a crime is being committed. Only in the morning will they learn that Jesus, the great prophet, has fallen into the hands of the chief priests and pharisees. While they have already planned to deliver Him to Pilate in the morning, accused of disturbing the peace, they intend this night to condemn Him as also guilty in religion. They only are restricted against passing a sentence of death. They have spent hours in sleepless anxiety, and do not know whether their plot will succeed. At last, their victims is brought before them, and He shall not escape their vengeance!

False witnesses have been prepared, but their testimony is contradictory against Him who is the Truth. Caiphas, seeing this plan for convicting Jesus of blasphemy is only serving to expose his accomplices, turns to another plan, asking Him a question, which obliges Our Lord to make an answer. This will discover blasphemy, bringing Jesus under the power of the synagogue. Out of respect, teaching us to show respect to those in authority, Jesus breaks His silence and answers, "Thou hast said it. I am, and hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God and coming in the clouds of heaven." All present proclaim Him guilty of death. He came to earth to restore man to Life, and yet here, creatures of death dare summon Him of Divine life and condemn Him to death. The Temple guards rush upon him, spitting and hitting and insulting Him, but His focus is outside, with what is happening with Peter. As Jesus predicted, he has fallen in presumption and denial, yet mercy abounds. The servants of the high priest lead Him near where Peter is standing, and He casts a look upon him of reproach, but also pardon. From this hour on, he can do nothing but lament his sin, until Easter morning, when Jesus appears after His resurrection, that he receives any consolation to his afflicted heart.

Although the Jews condemned Him as guilty of blasphemy, and according to the Law of Moses a blasphemer must be stoned to death. But they cannot apply the law; Jerusalem is not free or governed by her own laws. The power over life and death may only be exercised by her conquerors, and that in the name of Ceasar. How is it that the Jews can go through all this and never once remember the prophecy of Jacob, that the Messiah would come when the scepter should be taken away from Judah? They know the prophecies by heart, yet they are the ones to bring it about. The rumors regarding the trial spread rapidly through the city, and reach Judas. This wretched man had a passion for money, but there was nothing to make him desire the death of his Master; he knew Jesus' supernatural power. Perhaps he assumed that Jesus would just as easily escape the hands of His enemies. He attempts to give back the 30 pieces of silver; is he converted? No, he is in despair.

The Jews bring Jesus to Pilate Friday morning, with no evident charge laid against Him. The Son of God and the representative of the pagan world meet face to face. After discussion regarding His kingdom and the reality of His own dignity, something worthier of man's ambition than earthly honor arises - the Truth. To get rid of this problem and re-establish good understanding between himself and Herod, who happens to be in Jerusalem for the feast, Pilate sends Jesus to Herod as one of his Galileean subjects. But Herod, noting His noble silence, insults Him and simply sends Him back to Pilate. Because of the joyful triumph with which the people of the city greeted Jesus only a few days ago, Pilate then embarks on a new plan, the one to grant pardon - to Jesus (Yeshua, the one who saves) or Barabbas (Bar-abbas, "Son of the Father"). The Jewish leaders, though, threaten to accuse Pilate to the Emperor, and he has Jesus scourged for their pleasure, and delivers Him up to crucifixion.

Jesus is given over to the soldiers to be scourged. They rudely strip Him of His garments and tie Him to the pillar which is kept for this kind of torture. Fiercely do they strike Him; the blood flows down His sacred body. Let us adore this, the 2nd blood shedding of our Jesus, whereby He expiates the sins we and the whole world have committed by the flesh. This scourging is by the hands of Gentiles; the Jews delivered Him up to be punished, and the Romans were the executioners. Thus have we all had our share in the awful deicide.

The soldiers are tired. Their cruelty is going to rest, and their rest is derision. A king must have a crown! It is of thorns for the Son of David. They press it violently upon His head, and this is the 3rd blood shedding of our Redeemer. Then, that they may make their scoffing perfect, the soldiers throw a scarlet cloak over His shoulders, and put a reed for a scepter into His hand, bending the knee and saluting Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" The insults are accompanied by blows to His face, spitting upon Him, and taking the reed from His hand just to strike the thorns deeper into His head. Mangled and bleeding, He is returned to Pilate. This is the sight that Pilate intends to soften the hearts of the people. "Behold, the Man," he says without fully realizing the import of the words. Jesus, the new Man, comes not in the reality, but the appearance, the likeness, of sin. To teach us that the flesh must be brought into subjection to the spirit, Jesus' Flesh was torn by the scourges. To teach us that pride must give way to humility, the only crown He wears is of thorns. Instead of softening the heart, though, the cries grow more fierce to crucify Him. No king but Ceasar for the Jews (a reflection from their request that Samuel give them a king when they previously rejected God as their king in the OT).

The distance to Calvary was some 1300 paces. The executioners lead Jesus to the spot where the cross is lying on the ground. He lays Himself on the wood that is to serve as the altar, and they violently stretch his hands and feet, fastening them in place with nails. The blood gushes

forth from these wounds, the 4th blood shedding. Mary hears the strokes of the hammer, and every blow wounds her heart. The victim is fastened to the wood, but the cross is not to be left upon the ground. Isaiah foretold that the root of Jesse is to be raised up as a standard of all the nations. Not far from this spot a hole is in the ground, into which to place this Cross. They lift it up and with impatient vehemence, let it fall into the hole. The shock tears the 4 wounds, and He is there, naked before the multitude, He who came to cloth the nakedness that sin had caused in us! The Holy Fathers have noted the circumstance that the soldiers, when fixing the cross in the rock, have so placed it that Jesus has His back to Jerusalem (rather than toward her as a warning to others), and is stretching out His arms toward the countries of the west. The Sun of Truth is setting on the deicide city, and rising upon the new Jerusalem, that proud Rome, which feels she is destined to be the eternal city, yet knows not that she is to be so by the cross. The blood of the Redeemer flows down the cross and falls upon a skull, the skull of Adam, whose sin has called for this great expiation. The place, Calvary, denotes a skull, and according to the traditions of the Jews, here was buried our first parent, the first sinner. This has been noted by many of the holy fathers who knew the Jewish traditions - SS Basil, Ambrose, John Chrysostom, Epiphanius, Jerome, and even Origen. Cicero is the ancient authority, stating that crucifixion was at that time the most shameful and terrible of deaths, to which none but the greatest criminals were subjected. Hence, the doctrine of the crucified was a scandal to the Jews and folly to the heathen (1 Cor 1.23). Yet today the cross is a badge of honor, worn in the crowns of kings and on the breasts of men proud of the decoration. In the words of St. Athanasius, "sin was repaired on the tree where sin was committed." Where death began, there life arose. Christ was not beheaded, nor His body dismembered, so are we taught that His mystical body, the Church, should remain ever undivided. Christ bent His head to kiss us, spread His arms to embrace us, and opened His heart to love us (St. Augustine). The heart of Jesus was opened that its wounds might reveal to us the hidden wounds of His love for us (St. Bernard). It was not the soldiers, but His love for us, which nailed Christ to the Cross (St. Augustine). St. John Chrysostom states, "the sun hid his rays that he might not behold the sufferings of his Maker." This darkening of the sun is mentioned by other heathen writers. At the moment of His death, the earth opened, the rocks split, the veil of the Temple was rent, and many of the dead arose and appeared in Jerusalem. To confirm that He was, in fact, dead, the Roman soldier Longinus pierced His side, out of which flowed blood and water, the 5th blood shedding. In the evening, before sunset, His body was taken down from the cross and laid in the grave which belonged to Joseph of Arimathea.

On Saturday, His body remained in the tomb. Immediately after His death, however, His soul went down in triumph into the place where the souls of the justified under the Old Law were detained, according to the 4th Lateran Council. This place was referred to as limbo, distinct from purgatory, though sharing the trait that neither place enjoyed the Beatific Vision of God. Pain is suffered in purgatory, but there was no pain in limbo, yet it was also not the hell of the damned, either, where pain is eternal. The just souls there longed for the coming of the Savior to open to them the gates of heaven. This is the "Bosom of Abraham," or paradise, since by His arrival there it would be turned into paradise. After the death of Christ, however, this limbo ceased to exist. The "harrowing of hell," emptied it. Christ went there to announce to the souls thus detained the news of the redemption that He accomplished. St. Epiphanius tells us that the soul of Christ, united with the Godhead, went down into limbo, and St. Irenaeus says that the Lord spent 3 days there. According to St. Ignatius of Antioch, Our Lord returned with

a large company of souls. St. Cyprian says, "He went like a great king who delivers his subjects from a prison where they have been kept in endurance." Christ also revealed Himself also to the souls in hell, the true hell of the damned, and they were compelled to bow the knee to Him.

Here will we pause, and await, to discuss Our Lord's Resurrection when we meet next week. We will not meet on Easter Sunday, and so we will discuss it intellectually, so that the thoughts and prayers may work their way from head to heart as we encounter the reality.