

## REDEMPTION 3

### The Victim of Love

“*The son of man shall be delivered up to be crucified*” (Mat. 26:2). Christ does not say who will deliver Him.

Did His Father deliver Him? “*He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all*” (Rom 8:32). Did He surrender Himself? “*And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness*” (Eph 5:2). Did Judas deliver Him? “*What will you pay me for handing Him over to you?*” (Mt 26:15). Did the Jews deliver Him to Pilate? “*Thy own nation, and the chief priests, have delivered Thee up to me*” (Jn 18:35). Did Pilate hand Him over to the Gentiles? “*Then therefore he delivered him to them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him forth*” (Jn 19:16).

St Thomas distinguishes the different ways Christ was delivered to be crucified. “*The same act, for good or evil, is judged differently, accordingly as it proceeds from a different source. The Father delivered up Christ, and Christ surrendered Himself, from charity, and consequently we give praise to both: but Judas betrayed Christ from greed, the Jews from envy, and Pilate from worldly fear, for he stood in fear of Caesar; and these accordingly are held guilty*” (III Qu.47 a.3).

Our Lord shows clearly this distinction and affirms the voluntary character of His Passion in order to remove any suspicion of opposition between His Father and Him. “*Therefore, doth the Father love me: because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it away from me: but I lay it down of myself, and I have power to lay it down: and I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I received of my Father*” (Jn 10:17-18).

His purpose is His too great Love of Charity and only Christ can accomplish this Love. His human nature can suffer, but is not under the curse of original sin. “*Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends*” (Jn 15:13). Therefore, our Redeemer gives this testimony of the greatest Love for the whole human race. He is in the prime of human life, in full and perfect vigor, united with His Divinity. His infinite dignity makes his suffering infinite.

#### 1. Out of a loving obedience

“*He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross*” (Phil. 2:8).

He obeys as man and humbles Himself to redeem our pride. “*Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt*” (Mat. 26:39). Therefore, “*Christ suffered out of charity and out of obedience; because He fulfilled even the precepts of charity out of obedience only; and was obedient, out of love, to the Father’s command*” (III Qu.47 a.2).

#### 2. Freely

He chooses His hour. “*I will not now speak many things with you. For the prince of this world cometh, and in me he hath not anything. But that the world may know, that I love the Father: and as the Father hath given me commandment, so do I. Arise, let us go hence*” (Jn 14:30-31).

Neither his enemies nor the prince of this world have stopped this hour. “*Therefore doth the Father love Me: because I lay down My life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it away from*

*Me: but I lay it down of Myself, and I have power to lay it down: and I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I received of My Father” (In 10:17-18).*

### 3. Justice and Mercy

The Mystery of Redemption embraces Justice and Mercy at once and excludes any conflict. Liberal theology would ignore Justice, Protestants would stand on the vindictive reason. Both err about the Incarnation of Christ and the mode of His Redemption. Justice is carried out according to Mercy of which it is fully penetrated.

The Passion and Death of Christ have the character of a satisfaction of justice, of a suffering willed by God as a good to repair the sins of the human race. The only root of this Mystery is the Merciful Love of God for us, His superabundant Mercy.

God had the supreme power to forgive all fault without satisfaction, just by His Grace. He went farther. The punishment was just in relation to the culprit, but it is not unjust to be freed from punishment by the satisfaction of a friend. Only God in His Incarnation could satisfy enough for the sins of mankind.

*“Christ Jesus hath delivered me from the law of sin and of death... God sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh and of sin, hath condemned sin in the flesh; That the justification of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit” (Rom. 8:2-4).* On the Cross, blood flows, as if the flesh of Christ was a flesh of sin.

Where we need and cannot, He can and needs not. Here is the infallible encounter with Love, the Justice of Love.

*“Being justified freely by His grace, through the Redemption, that is in Christ Jesus, Whom God hath proposed to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood to the shewing of his justice, for the remission of former sins” (Rm 3,24-25).* It is Justice and Mercy to be redeemed by the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has satisfied for the sin of mankind by His Passion, and so man has been delivered by His Justice. Since man can not satisfy himself for the sin of all human nature, God has given him His Son to effect this satisfaction by His Mercy.

*“God, who is rich in mercy for his exceeding charity wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ, by whose grace you are saved” (Ep 2:4-5).* Thus this came from a more abundant Mercy than if He had forgiven sins without satisfaction. There is no greater mercy than to give His blood and His life for His enemies. *“O happy fault that earned for us so great, so glorious a Redeemer!” (Exultet, Easter Vigil).*

The mode of our Redemption is an expiatory sacrifice. However, in reality the expiatory sacrifice is offered by the Merciful Love of Christ, Who did not expiate anything, as He owes nothing, but He can and He wants out of Love.

God is most simple, He is Love and His Justice is Love. Justice is inseparable from Mercy and Mercy inseparable from justice. All this ineffable Mystery is revealed to us in His pierced Heart. He suffered the most terrible physical, psychological and moral sorrows in His Peace and in His Joy.

The Redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot be a criminal substitution according to vindictive justice. No hint of this error is to be found anywhere, but in heresy.