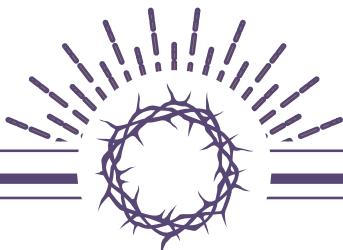


THE ROAD TO CALVARY



THE ROAD TO
CALVARY

DAILY
MEDITATIONS
FOR LENT
AND EASTER

ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

TAN Books
GASTONIA, NORTH CAROLINA

The Road to Calvary: Daily Meditations for Lent and Easter © 2023 TAN Books

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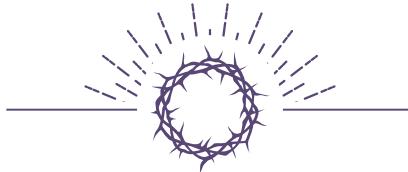
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CONTENTS

Publisher's Note ix

Lenten Meditations

1. The Value of Meditating on the Passion.....	3
2. The Love of Jesus Christ	6
3. Jesus Chose to Suffer (Part 1)	9
4. Jesus Chose to Suffer (Part 2)	11
5. The Principal End of the Passion.....	14
6. The Foolishness of God	17
7. Jesus Suffers from the Beginning of His Life	20
8. Jesus's Sufferings Compared to Ours.....	23
9. Jesus's Desire to Suffer for Us.....	26
10. Suffering with Patience	29
11. Choosing Mortification.....	32
12. Jesus's Desire to Die for Us.....	35
13. The Sacrament of Love	38

14. Jesus Annihilates Himself in the Holy Eucharist	41
15. Why Does God Love Us?.....	44
16. Jesus's Fear of Death	47
17. Jesus's Sorrow	50
18. The Malice of Sin.....	53
19. The Ignominies of Christ Crucified.	56
20. Jesus Is Spat Upon.....	59
21. The Reproach of Men	62
22. The Cruelty of the Scourging.....	65
23. The Pulpit of the Cross.....	68
24. The Thirst of Jesus.....	71
25. The Insults Offered to Jesus Christ on the Cross	73
26. The Council of the Jews and the Treachery of Judas...	76
27. The Sufferings of Jesus Were Extreme	79
28. Jesus's Interior Sufferings	82
29. The Desolate Life of Jesus Christ.	85
30. Jesus Treated as the Last of Men	89
31. The Passion of Jesus Christ Is Our Consolation.....	92
32. Jesus Makes His Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem ..	95
33. Jesus Prays in the Garden	98
34. Jesus Is Apprehended and Led before Caiaphas	101

35. Jesus Is Led before Pilate and Herod.....	104
36. Jesus Is Scourged at the Pillar.....	107
37. Jesus Is Crowned with Thorns.....	110
38. Pilate Exhibits Jesus to the People.....	113
39. Jesus Is Condemned by Pilate.....	116
40. Jesus Carries the Cross to Calvary.....	119
41. Jesus Is Placed upon the Cross.....	122
42. Jesus upon the Cross	125
43. The Words Spoken by Jesus upon the Cross	127
44. Jesus Dies upon the Cross.....	130
45. Jesus Hanging Dead upon the Cross.....	133
46. Mary Present on Calvary	136

Easter Meditations

1. The Joys of Heaven	141
2. The Soul That Leaves This Life in the State of Grace	144
3. The Happiness of Heaven.....	147
4. The Hope of Salvation	150
5. The Graces from the Passion	153
6. The Eternal Father's Love	156
7. The Burial and Resurrection of Jesus Christ	159
8. Jesus Crucified Is Our Only Hope.....	162

Appendix

Prayer to Jesus Crucified	167
Prayer to Jesus	170
The Clock of the Passion	174



PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Saint Alphonsus de Liguori (1696–1787) was an Italian Catholic bishop, spiritual writer, composer, musician, artist, poet, lawyer, scholastic philosopher, and theologian. He also founded the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, known as the Redemptorists, in 1732. He was one of the most prolific writers in the history of the Catholic Church and was later declared a doctor of the Church and the patron of moral theologians. TAN Books is pleased to present this book, *The Road to Calvary: Daily Meditations for Lent and Easter* from the original book entitled *The Passion and Death of Jesus Christ*.

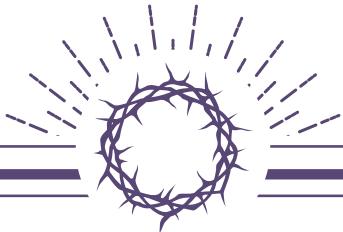
Few saints have written with such love, depth, and simplicity on Christ, Our Lady, the mysteries of our Faith, and especially the sufferings of Christ as Saint Alphonsus de Liguori. Meditating on the passion and death of Jesus is the surest path to virtue and holiness. As Saint Alphonsus so beautifully wrote, “Who, then, can ever complain that he suffers wrongfully, when he considers Jesus, who was *bruised for our sins*? Who can refuse to obey, on account of some inconvenience, when Jesus *became obedient*”

unto death? Who can refuse ignominies, when he beholds Jesus treated as a fool, as a mock king, as a disorderly person; struck, spit upon His face, and suspended upon an infamous gibbet?"

TAN Books is pleased to present this little work for the first time to join several other TAN works by Saint Alphonsus, such as *The Glories of Mary*, *Preparation for Death*, and *Visits to the Blessed Sacrament*.

May you, dear reader, prepare your heart for the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus through these powerful daily Lenten and Easter meditations. The road to Calvary begins and ends with prayer.

The Publisher



LENTEN MEDITATIONS



MEDITATION I: ASH WEDNESDAY

THE VALUE OF MEDITATING ON THE PASSION

“**H**e who desires,” says Saint Bonaventure, “to go on advancing from virtue to virtue, from grace to grace, should meditate continually on the Passion of Jesus.” And he adds that “there is no practice more profitable for the entire sanctification of the soul than the frequent meditation of the sufferings of Jesus Christ.”

Saint Augustine also said that a single tear shed at the remembrance of the passion of Jesus is worth more than a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, or a year of fasting on bread and water. Yes, because it was for this end that our Savior suffered so much: in order that we should think of His sufferings; because if we think on them, it is impossible not to be inflamed with divine love: *The charity of Christ presses us*,¹ says Saint Paul. Jesus is loved

¹ 2 Cor. 5:14.

by few, because few consider the pains He has suffered for us, but he that frequently considers them cannot live without loving Jesus. "The charity of Christ presses us." He will feel himself so constrained by His love that he will not find it possible to refrain from loving a God so full of love, who has suffered so much to make us love Him.

Therefore the Apostle said that he desired to know nothing but Jesus, and Jesus crucified—that is, the love that He has shown us on the cross: *I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.*² And, in truth, from what books can we better learn the science of the saints—that is, the science of loving God—than from Jesus crucified? That great servant of God, Brother Bernard of Corlione, the Capuchin, not being able to read, his brother religious wanted to teach him, upon which he went to consult his crucifix, but Jesus answered him from the cross, "What is reading? What are books? Behold, I am the book wherein you may continually read the love I have borne you." O great subject to be considered during our whole life and during all eternity! A God dead for the love of us! A God dead for the love of us! O wonderful subject!

Saint Thomas Aquinas was one day paying a visit to Saint Bonaventure and asked him from what book he had drawn all the beautiful lessons he had written. Saint Bonaventure showed him the image of the Crucified, which was completely blackened by all the kisses that he had given it, and said, "This is my book

² 1 Cor. 2:2.

whence I receive everything that I write; and it has taught me whatever little I know."

In short, all the saints have learned the art of loving God from the study of the crucifix. Brother John of Alvernia, every time that he beheld Jesus wounded, could not restrain his tears. Brother James of Tuderto, when he heard the passion of our Redeemer read, not only wept bitterly, but broke out into loud sobs, overcome with the love with which he was inflamed toward his beloved Lord.



MEDITATION 2: THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST

We read in history of a proof of love so prodigious that it will be the admiration of all ages. There was once a king, lord of many kingdoms, who had one only son, so beautiful, so holy, so amiable that he was the delight of his father, who loved him as much as himself. This young prince had a great affection for one of his slaves, so much so that, the slave having committed a crime for which he had been condemned to death, the prince offered himself to die for the slave; the father, being jealous of justice, was satisfied to condemn his beloved son to death in order that the slave might remain free from the punishment that he deserved, and thus the son died a malefactor's death, and the slave was freed from punishment.

This fact, the like of which has never happened in this world, and never will happen, is related in the Gospels, where we read that the Son of God, the Lord of the universe, seeing that man

was condemned to eternal death in punishment of his sins, chose to take upon Himself human flesh, and thus to pay by His death the penalty due to man: *He was offered because it was His own will.*³ And His Eternal Father caused Him to die upon the cross to save us miserable sinners: *He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.*⁴ What do you think, O devout soul, of this love of the Son and of the Father?

You, then, O my beloved Redeemer, choose by Your death to sacrifice Yourself in order to obtain the pardon of my sins. And what return of gratitude shall I then make to You? You have done too much to oblige me to love You; I should indeed be most ungrateful to You if I did not love You with my whole heart. You have given for me Your divine life; I, miserable sinner that I am, give You my own life. Yes, I will at least spend that period of life that remains to me only in loving You, obeying You, and pleasing You.

O men, men, let us love this our Redeemer, who, being God, has not disdained to take upon Himself our sins in order to satisfy by His sufferings for the chastisement which we have deserved: *Surely He has borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows.*⁵ Saint Augustine says that Our Lord, in creating us, formed us by virtue of His power, but in redeeming us, He has saved us from death by means of His sufferings: “He created us in His strength; He sought us back in His weakness.”⁶

³ Is. 53:7.

⁴ Rom. 8:32.

⁵ Is. 53:4.

⁶ *In Joannem*, tractus 15.

How much do I not owe You, O Jesus my Savior! Oh, if I were to give my blood a thousand times over—if I were to spend a thousand lives for You—it would yet be nothing. Oh, how could anyone that meditated much on the love which You have shown him in Your passion love anything else but You? Through the love with which You loved us on the cross, grant me the grace to love You with my whole heart. I love You, infinite Goodness; I love You above every other good, and I ask nothing more of You but Your holy love.



MEDITATION 3: FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

JESUS CHOSE TO SUFFER (PART I)

“**T**wo things,” says Cicero, “make us know a lover—that he does good to his beloved and that he suffers torments for him, and this last is the greatest sign of true love.” God has indeed already shown His love to man by many benefits bestowed upon him, but His love would not have been satisfied by only doing good to man, as says Saint Peter Chrysologus, if He had not found the means to prove to him how much He loved him by also suffering and dying for him, as He did by taking upon Him human flesh: “But He held it to be little if He showed His love without suffering,”⁷ and what greater means could God have discovered to prove to us the immense love which He bears us than by making Himself man and suffering for us? “In no other

⁷ *Serm. 69.*

way could the love of God towards us be shown," writes Saint Gregory Nazianzen.

My beloved Jesus, how much have You labored to show me Your love and to make me enamored of Your goodness! Great indeed, then, would be the injury I should do You if I were to love You but little, or to love anything else but You.

Ah, when He showed Himself to us, a God wounded, crucified, and dying, did He not indeed (says Cornelius à Lapide) give us the greatest proofs of the love that He bears us? "God showed His utmost love on the cross."⁸ And before him, St. Bernard said that Jesus, in His passion, showed us that His love towards us could not be greater than it was: "In the shame of the Passion is shown the greatest and incomparable love."⁹ The Apostle writes that when Jesus Christ chose to die for our salvation, then appeared how far the love of God extended towards us miserable creatures: *The goodness and kindness of God our Savior appeared.*¹⁰

O my most loving Savior! I feel indeed that all Your wounds speak to me of the love that You bear me. And who that had so many proofs of Your love could resist loving You in return? Saint Teresa was indeed right, O most amiable Jesus, when she said that he who loves You not gives a proof that he does not know You.

⁸ In 1 Cor. 1:25.

⁹ *De Passione c. 41.*

¹⁰ Titus 3:4.



MEDITATION 4: SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

JESUS CHOSE TO SUFFER (PART 2)

Jesus Christ could easily have obtained for us salvation without suffering, and in leading a life of ease and delight, but no, Saint Paul says, *having joy set before Him, He endured the cross.*¹¹ He refused the riches, the delights, the honors of the world, and chose for Himself a life of poverty and a death full of suffering and ignominy. And wherefore? Would it not have sufficed for Him to have offered to His eternal Father one single prayer for the pardon of man? For this prayer, being of infinite value, would have been sufficient to save the world, and infinite worlds besides. Why, then, did He choose for Himself so much suffering, and a death so cruel, that an author has said very truly that through mere pain the soul of Jesus separated itself from His

¹¹ Heb. 12:2.

body?¹² To what purpose so much cost in order to save man? Saint John Chrysostom answers, a single prayer of Jesus would indeed have sufficed to redeem us, but it was not sufficient to show us the love that our God has borne us: "That which sufficed to redeem us was not sufficient for love." And Saint Thomas confirms this when he says, "Christ, in suffering from love and obedience offered to God more than the expiation of the offence of the human race demanded."¹³ Because Jesus loved us so much, He desired to be loved very much by us, and therefore He did everything that He could, even unto suffering for us, in order to conciliate our love and to show that there was nothing more that He could do to make us love Him: "He endured much weariness," says Saint Bernard, "that He might bind man to love Him much."¹⁴

And what greater proof of love, says our Savior Himself, can a friend show towards the person he loves than to give his life for his sake? *Greater love than this no man has, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*¹⁵ But You, O most loving Jesus, says Saint Bernard, have done more than this, since You have given Your life for us, who were not Your friends, but Your enemies and rebels against You: "You have a greater charity, Lord, in giving Your life for Your enemies."¹⁶ And this is what the Apostle

¹² Vincent Contenson, *Theologia Mentis et Cordis*, I. 10, d. 4, c. 1, sp. 1.

¹³ *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 48. a. 2.

¹⁴ *In Canticum Canticorum*, sermo 11.

¹⁵ John 15:13.

¹⁶ *Sermo de Passione Domini*.

observes when he writes, *He commands His charity towards us, because when as yet we were sinners, according to the time, Christ died for us.*¹⁷

You would then die for me, Your enemy, O my Jesus, and yet can I resist so much love? Behold, here I am; since You so anxiously desire that I should love You, I will drive away every other love from my breast and will love You alone.

¹⁷ Rom. 5:8–9.