

**“Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scriptures), I Thirst. A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to His mouth.” (Jn 19:28-29)**

1) Guardini, The Lord: “He drank the dregs of that responsibility-down to the bottom of the chalice.” “The plunge from God towards the void which man in his revolt had begun (chute in which the creature can only despair or break) Christ undertook in love. Knowingly, voluntarily, he experienced it with all the sensitiveness of his divinely human heart. The greater the victim, the more terrible the blows that fell him. No one ever died as Jesus died, who was life itself.”

- To ponder the Passion of Jesus Christ and consider his last words is to know no death was ever like this death, where every word and gesture were intentionally and careful chosen and would echo throughout eternity...

2) Why does He Thirst?

- Jewish Annotated NT: Only time is in the Gospel of St John that Jesus explicitly consumes food or drink, we must then be attentive to so simple and yet remarkable this gesture was in the saving mission of Christ.
- Sheen, the Life of Christ: “It was not surprising that he thirsted; what was surprising was that he said so. He who threw stars into their orbits and spheres into space, He who shut up the sea with doors, He who made waters come out of the rock smitten by Moses, He who had made all the seas and rivers and fountains, He who said to the woman of Samaria: the one who drinks the water I give him will not know thirst anymore, not let fall from His lips the shortest of the seven cries from the Cross: I Thirst”

3) Which scripture verse is Jesus referring to as being the fulfillment of scripture? St. John took time in the midst of his

Passion account to inform us which gestures and words that Christ utters were fulfillment of OT prophecies that spoke of the death of the Messiah. To which verse he is referring to?

- a. Ignatius Study Bible, St John: This is not the narcotic offered earlier in Mark's gospel, Jesus refused to drink the wine mixed with nard that served as a narcotic to dull the pain of crucifixion, opting to experience the full torment of the Cross with his mind and faculties clear and aware of all that he was to endure.
- b. Navarre, St John: PS 69:21-22 "In thy sight are all they afflict me; my heart hath expected reproach and misery. And I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none: and for one that would comfort me, and I found none. And they gave me gall for my food and in my thirst they have me vinegar to drink." \*\*The cry of a man abandoned and left to the devices of one's enemies, offering sour drink in one's torment. Here we see Jesus surrounded by his enemies, both the Romans who are his executioners and the Jews who mocked him, be it the high priests or people of Jerusalem.
- c. Death of the Messiah: Ps 22:16, connecting to the words "My God, My God, Why have you abandoned me..." to "dried up like baked clay is my throat, my tongue cleaves to my jaws; you have brought me down to the dust of death." We behold the agony of the Suffering Servant of YHWH who is in the final pangs of death, his body drained of water, dehydrated and being reduced to unbearable pain with each breath and swallow of the parched throat. Continues the psalm he began to recite in his last word...
- d. Benedict XVI in Jesus of Nazareth elaborates on how "Psalm 22 is Israel's great cry of anguish, in the midst of its sufferings, addressed to the apparently silent God." He then goes on to connect this scene to the song of the vineyard in Isaiah 5, where God brings his lament before

Israel. He had planted a vineyard on the fruitful height and had taken every possible care over it. The vineyard of Israel fails to yield for God the noble fruit of justice, which is grounded in love. It yields the sour grapes of man, who is concerned only for himself. It yields vinegar instead of wine. God's lament, which we hear in the song of the prophet, is brought to fulfillment as the vinegar is proffered to the thirsting saviour." BUT "it is not only Israel, but the Church, it is we ourselves who repeatedly respond to God's bountiful love with vinegar- with a sour heart that is unable to perceive God's love. "I Thirst": this cry of Jesus is addressed to every single one of us."

\*\*\*Even in the depth of his agony, Jesus is showing his love for humanity and his desire that we never tire of drinking of the wine of repentance, conversion and forgiveness, even if we have given up on ourselves and given up on Him, He has not given up on us!!!\*\*\*

- e. Could Jesus also be referring to the Last Supper, when in John's Gospel he now speaks of "The cup my father has given me, am I not to drink it?" (Jn 18:11). Here he shows his disciples that the final chalice he would drink was the depth of His Passion, poor sour wine so that people could eventually drink the New Wine of the Messianic Age that would flow from his pierced side.
- f. Neuhaus: earlier in John's Gospel, during the festival of booths in Jerusalem, that commemorates Israel's wandering in the Promised Land, when they thirsted physically and for God, Our Lord taught "let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink." Now the world can drink from the water that pours forth from the side of Christ...
- g. In conclusion, it appear our Lord is fulfilling multiple scriptural verses and prophecies that spoke of the passion of the Messiah, showing how rich this last word was in the drama of the Passion.

4) In pondering the thirst of Christ, we also see a powerful Connection to Jesus with the **Passover Lamb of Israel**- To utter the words "I Thirst" are not only to fulfill the prophecies about the Passion of the Messiah, but also to reveal how Jesus is the fulfillment of the Passover Lamb, the lamb of salvation that Abraham said would be provided by God for Sacrifice and who Jesus tells us in John's Gospel was the day that Abraham saw and rejoiced, for Isaac was spared and another was given by God to save humanity from the wages of sin and death.

In order to offer Christ relief from thirst, it is notable that this drink is offered via a branch of hyssop.

- During the First Passover in Egypt, the Israelites used hyssop branches to smear blood on doorposts as a mark of divine protection from the angel of death (Ex 12:21-23). Here the people are delivered from destruction by the blood of the lamb, and yearly this memorial sacrifice would be offered to remember God's saving power. Later in Exodus, Moses sprinkled the people with the blood of the covenant, using a hyssop branch, a foreshadowing to when the entire world would be sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb on Golgotha.
- Death of Messiah- use of hyssop- In the Passion accounts of Mark and Matthew, a sponge is mentioned as what was given to Jesus to be used to quench his thirst. A Jewish bystander holds it up as a sign of mockery for Jesus calling on Elijah. In John, it is assumed the soldiers offer the wine, for them less an act of mockery but more a customary gesture to quench the thirst of the crucified. What was the hyssop?: known as Syrian marjoram, a shrub about a yard in height, with large stem and branches of leaves and flowers, highly absorptive and suitable for sprinkling. From a branch that

- has signs of new life will satisfy the dying thirst of the one who is the source of eternal life!
- In John's Gospel, we read that the slaughter of Passover lambs in the Temple began at noon, when Jesus was condemned to death, therefore the hyssop appears near the hour of 3pm to show how Jesus will die at the moment the paschal lambs are being slain in the temple and their blood drained from their bodies to flow out the east side of the temple.
  - Death of Messiah: he accepts to drink from the chalice offered by his Father, by drinking from hyssop, he shows that the announcement made by JBap that He is the Lamb of God, that prophetic utterance has come to fulfillment, now the lamb is slain for his people. "Jesus, who has come from God, has completed the commission that the Father has given him, so that his death becomes a deliberate decision that all is now finished, taken by one who is in control."

#### 5) 4<sup>th</sup> Cup of the Passover Meal is now drunk.

\* Is notable omission in the Passover meal as recorded in Luke that Jesus finished the third cup of the Paschal Feast but after doing so says he will omit drinking the 4<sup>th</sup> cup as he will not drink of it until He is the kingdom of His Father. Jesus leaves the Paschal sacrifice incomplete, or rather, shows that the meal remains in progress and will only be complete upon the Cross.

\* By drinking the sour wine on the cross, from a branch of hyssop, Jesus drinks the 4<sup>th</sup> cup, completes the Paschal Sacrifice and passes over to the Kingdom of His Heavenly Father. And so the final chalice that Jesus will drink from was none other than a branch of hyssop, he drinks from what once offered the blood of the paschal lamb and in doing so seals the New Covenant promised at the Last Supper.

\* Neuhaus: In a sense, the chalice Jesus just received is also now being offered to His Church. To drink of this chalice is to

also imagine it coming upon a branch of hyssop, to drink the blood of Christ is a yes to his passion and sharing in his Cross. \* It is also to recognize that Jesus had been preparing to drink of this chalice since the foundation of the world. That expression is used throughout the Gospel of John and in the Book of Revelation to speak of how the Lord's sacrifice was not an impromptu event but one that had been anticipated since the fall in Eden. It is only on Good Friday that all is at last coming together, every prophecy, every foreshadowing, was soon to be complete and would be the message that the Church will carry until the passing way of this world... Neuhaus: "To share in the Body and Blood of the lamb that was slain is to be with him on the cross. In the vinegary wine on the hyssop there was for him, and there is for us, a foretaste of the new wine of the Father's kingdom, which has no other foundation than crucified love. Of these truths the community of the Eucharistic covenant is the witness, thus the Church is sent to all the world, with hyssop in hand."

#### 6) Spirituality of I Thirst:

- This verse has traditionally referred to the Church's missionary impulse, driven by the thirst of Christ for the salvation of souls. It is to inspire us as to the urgency needed to alert the world to our story, which is a story of amazing grace by which the world is redeemed and all are invited to dine at the banquet of eternal life, if only we say yes and leave aside everything that prevents us from being seated at this table.
- \* The missionary mandate of the Church is to incorporate into the Eucharistic covenant those who are chosen by Christ since the foundation of the world, to teach them the way to salvation, to help them know that the one who put a leaf of hyssop to his lips to drink some sour wine was saving you from damnation and offering you paradise!!!

- It is this thirst for souls that tells the story of countless generation of missionaries, many who also became martyrs. Think of the great Canadian martyrs, who saw their work among the First Nations to be the ultimate rescue mission, one that was worth offering their own lives to achieve. They did not hesitate to believe that to dip their finger in water and place it on the head of dying Iroquois child would save that child from eternal death and satisfy the thirst of Christ to welcome one more child into heaven. If they and other missionaries do not experience the same thirst for souls, they quickly give up their work as futile and pointless.
- In every chapel of the Missionaries of Charity, there is a crucifix behind the altar, typically one that is adorned with blood and shows the horror of the Passion, and written close to the Cross are the words “I Thirst”. I first saw this crucifix in the chapel of the Missionaries of Charity in Toronto. I was struck how the Sisters would have pondered this icon of Divine Love on a daily basis. They insisted that all guests who joined them for Mass be seated while the sisters knelt for the duration of the Mass. I have no doubts the penitential act they made was but one way they satisfied Our Lord’s THIRST for souls, offering small discomforts for the care of others, and embodying his words since to utter them but without gestures that are void of sacrifice would empty them of their salvific meaning.
- Mother Teresa: “we want to satiate the thirst of Jesus on the cross for the love of souls, to offer to Jesus in ‘distressed disguise’” acts of love.
- Neuhaus: From the Cross, I Thirst. And those who kneel at his cross share his thirst, which is both a thirst for him and of all for whom he thirsts. It is a willingness to say yes to take up the cross and follow Christ but realizing that if you do so, then according the great Dietrich Bonhoeffer, you

must accept that “when Jesus calls a man, he calls him to come and die.”

- To what extent do we embody the call of “I Thirst”? Is this a prayer that we often meditate upon? Do we long to aid others on the path to salvation, do we thirst for them to be holy and to be with Christ, or are we only concerned about our own salvation and remain cold and indifferent if others are drawn to salvation in Christ?
- We cannot give up on the call to evangelize and satisfy the thirst of Christ for souls. We cannot fall into the error of thinking that as long as you are a good person you will go to heaven. That will lead countless souls to hell and we will be responsible for not at least trying to bring people to salvation in Christ.
- Or else was the cry of Christ on that Cross of “I Thirst” was a word of defeat, the end of road, the failure of everything hoped for? We believe it was the greatest missionary summons of all time, but if we do not live it and seek to bring others to Christ, we make a mockery of his thirst and offer him no relief. But to seek to satisfy his thirst by both drawing closer to him and inviting others to do the same, that is to live as giving glory to God and encouraging others to live the same.

7) I Thirst as a call to practice the works of mercy and continue the saving mission of Christ. While his words are a call to pray for the conversion of sinners, it is also a call to be merciful as Our Lord is merciful. End this evening with the words of Archbishop Alban Goodier, SJ:



- ❖ “He had known thirst before; indeed He had been careful to let it be seen throughout his life how he suffered from the needs of the body.” “For some he would turn water into wine; for others he would multiply bread so that all might eat; for Himself he was content to sit by a well, and say to a passer-by Give me to drink.” ....”He had often used the relieving of thirst as an illustration in teaching. Jesus knew thirst in his missionary tours, he knew the agony with which he would die. Hence when he spoke of the torture of a soul condemned, it is this torture of thirst on which he dwells- To put the tip of finger in water to quench the tongue of the condemned....But he also promised heaven to those who gave Him to drink- if a man thirst let him come to me a drink.”
- ❖ “Of all His suffering this was the only one of which Jesus spoke during the whole of His Passion. In a true sense it was the greatest of them all, yet it was also one which might easily have passed unnoticed. Thus why Jesus chose the cup of water as His emblem of charity, why he choose the quenching of thirst as the character of His own deep love. The loss of blood, the long fast, the all but bursting heart, had indeed produced in him a thirst almost intolerable.”
- ❖ “By accepting the wine he would reward this last act of charity, even though it came from an executioner, though others about him might still murmur in contempt, stay, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down from the cross. Jesus would pay honour to the man who helped Him in his hour of distress; for to have been the last man on earth to serve the dying Lord, was not this honour indeed? For whosoever shall give me to drink a cup of water in my name amen I say to you he shall not lose his reward.”