

**English translation of
“The Spiritual Clock”
by Francesco da Corigliano Calabro.**

**Translated
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Translator’s note:

This translation is based on the introduction, text and footnotes which were published by P. Costanzo Cargnoni O.F.M. Cap. In I Frati Cappuccini: Documenti e testimonianze dell primo secolo, Edizioni Frate Indovino, Perugia, vol III/1, pp.555 – 636. The only additions to the notes made by the translator are references to Francis of Assisi: The Early Documents, edited by Regis Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., J. A. Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M. and William J. Short O.F.M. Conv., New York City Press, New York, London, Manila, for an English version of quotations from the Writings or Biographies of St Francis.

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“SPIRITUAL CLOCK” BY FRANCESCO DA COREGLIANO

Introduction by Castanzo Cargnoni O.F.M. Cap.

As a spiritual writer Francesco Longo who came from Calabria but lived in the Roman Province, is someone who is not well known. He is much better known for the weighty volumes that he left that deal with the theology of St Bonaventure, with church history and with church law. In fact, among other things, he published an important volume, the first in a series that was subsequently interrupted by his death that occurred in Rome in 1625, that was supposed to prepare the way for Father Trigoso’s project of a Theological Summa of Bonaventure’s writings that would be similar to the Summa of St Thomas. He produced other large volumes on the history of the Popes and the Councils. Alongside this gigantic output, the two volumes that were published in Venice and Rome in 1621 and 1625 and which were intended to teach how to meditate on Christ’s Passion and the mysteries of the life of the Madonna, might appear to be nothing. These volumes are as handy and portable as a watch which explains the odd title: A Spiritual Watch Concerning Our Lord Jesus Christ’s Passion, Treating All the Principal Mysteries of the Life of the Virgin Mary.

At first glance this appeared to be nothing new. In fact, it contained an ascetic methodology that was wide spread in the devotional practice of the Order, but which was conveyed in new imagery. It proposed assigning the twenty-four hours of the day, both of the night and day to serve as prompts for various topics for meditation that would work like a pocket watch that you consult to see what time it is. By doing this

every hour, you “could see what the Lord was doing, where he was and what he suffered” hour by hour. This was a method of always being in the presence of the Crucified, and of being united in filial love with the Mother of God, with her life and her mysteries. By doing this we can remain in a state of constant prayer.

*The pages of these works, that are so rich in theological doctrine which is well structured and full of affective spirituality, deserve to occupy more space in our anthology. **We have selected only two meditations, one on the Passion and the other on the Madonna**, so that the reader may taste just a drop of this very sweet liquid distilled from the heart of this devout Calabrian Capuchin who was smitten with love for the Crucified and the Virgin Mary. It is certain that he knew and was friendly with St Felix of Cantalice during the last years before his death. This is not only proved by the Process of Canonisation in 1615, but also, indirectly, by his spiritual works.*

Prologue

5266 Remember that day when you came out of Egypt and out of the house of bondage. ¹Moses said this to the Hebrew people to convince them of the favour that they had received from God when God freed them from the hands of Pharaoh. Because of what had taken place in the past Moses knew well that God wanted his people to have a vivid and clear memory of the favours and graces he had given them. He wanted them to keep the Sabbath holy in remembrance of the gift of creation;² to recall the gift of manna by keeping a small portion in the Ark;³ to recall their departure and freedom from the hands of Pharaoh saying: “Remember the day on which you left Egypt and the house of servitude.” This is really important because recalling the favour that you have received is like having a key that opens a treasure. Just as anyone who is ungrateful does not deserve the door to the treasures to be opened, so on the other hand, a grateful person who remembers seems to hold a key in his hand so as to be able to enter any time that he wishes and receive greater treasures.

Now, since we Christians have received infinite graces from God, there can be no doubt that we are bound to continually thank and praise his Majesty, especially for the priceless gift of the Passion and death which he underwent for us, by means of which we were freed from the hand of and servitude to the infernal Pharaoh. Because of this the words that were written above apply to us in a special way. Out of gratitude, from a sense of duty and because they are so helpful to us we should never let them fall from our mind.

Reasons and motives for keeping the memory of the Passion bright

5267 In the first place we are obliged to speak about not being grateful about the amount of loving blood and life that has been lost on account of us. As we read in the Book of Ester,⁴ if what King Assuerus said in the Book of Accounts about the good service Mardochai had performed and about what saved Mardochai when some ungrateful servants had hatched a plot against his majesty is true how much more

¹ Ex 13, 3.

² Cf. Ex 20, 8-11.

³ Ex 16, 34-35.

⁴ Ester 1.

should a Christian keep written on his heart and frequently read about God's infinite gift of having suffered death and his passion for him, for this is how God wanted to free him from the hands of the infernal devil.

Our faith leaves us in no doubt that each one of us and all of us were condemned to everlasting death because of offending God. Blessed Christ took upon his innocent and delicate person the suffering which, by any kind of logic, ought to have fallen on us. Thus, if we do not wish to be ungrateful to such a generous benefactor let us be mindful of this. Thus, we should develop a devout and grateful soul and say: *Thy justifications I will never forget for by them thou hast given me life.* That is, I will never ever forget your saving work since this is how you restored my life.⁵

It is said of the saintly King Josias that what was remembered about him was as pleasing as the taste of sweetest honey in the mouth.⁶ The recall of what the Son of God willed to suffer for us is incomparably greater since because of this we have been filled with a thousand sweet things.

5268 Thus it appears that Samson's riddle in the Book of Judges chapter 14 symbolises this. *Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.*⁷ This means that out of the eater came something to eat: out of the strong came something strong. The meaning comes from this event, that when he was travelling to meet Sarah at Thamnatha accompanied by his family to celebrate the marriage that had been arranged, while on his way, he found a swarm of bees in the mouth of a lion that he had killed a few days before, and he extracted a large cone of honey that he ate giving some to his father and mother.⁸

However, O devout soul, who is the strong lion, unless it is the one of whom it was said: *the lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed,*⁹ which means the lion of the tribe of Judah has won. It is also true that he was killed and crucified by us when we had committed such grave sins. However, it is just as true that from the mouth of this lion and because of what he did and suffered there came out a large portion of honey so that all Christians might taste its sweetness by using their memory if they wanted to taste sweetness.

It is true that all God's words and all the sacred mysteries are honey according to what has been said: *How sweet are thy words to my palate more than honey to my mouth,*¹⁰ That means, O Lord how sweet are your words to my jaws! Certainly Christ's Passion is beyond all honey, when it is masticated. It is honey that surpasses all honey, beyond any sweet substance, beyond all ambrosia and beyond all nectar.

5269 Commenting on the words of chapter 7 of Isaiah "he shall eat butter and honey" Origen¹¹ tries to work out what chapter six of the Book of Proverbs means when it describes how a small number of bees working in order accomplish more than

⁵ Ps 118, 93 (*Vulg.*)

⁶ Cf 2 Kgs, 22-23; 22, 2 and 23.

⁷ Jud. 14, 14.

⁸ Judg. 14, 8-10.

⁹ Apoc. 5, 5.

¹⁰ Ps 118, 103 (*Vulg.*)

¹¹ Cf. Origenes, *In Isaiam II*, n. 2 (*PG* 13, 226ss.

a larger number who are in disorder, He replies that all subjects of meditation are good, but meditating on the suffering Christ is better than any other because Christ is the queen bee. Whoever sucks honey from that stone, whoever meditates on this bone of contention will get more honey than from anywhere else to make his jaws taste sweetness. What I wish to say is that meditating on Christ's Passion more than on anything else the soul receives more enlightenment towards understanding and feelings.

Whoever can recognise Christ's divinity as did the Centurion, and say *Truly this man was really the Son of God*¹²; will see that in dying he did it all for love of us;¹³ that his prayer was answered because of his reverence;¹⁴ that his poverty implied dying on the throne of the Cross while naked and stripped, that his strength meant that *he would draw all things to himself*; ¹⁵ meaning that God's power conquers everything; that his great generosity meant that he gave us his Only Begotten Son;¹⁶ that his mercy paid so great a price.¹⁷

In this mystery we can see our soul's immortality because she has become immortal by means of this mystery. We see how atrocious sin is as it required so much of a remedy. We see how ungrateful the world is as it put to death the one who gave it life. From within this mystery the naked Christ shows us how a Christian ought to dress and from Christ wearing a crown how a Christian should adorn himself. A Christian ought to learn from the fact that Christ drank gall and vinegar how to take pleasure in drinking. A Christian ought to learn how to vindicate himself from Christ praying for those who crucified him. A Christian ought to learn how to present himself from Christ hanging on the cross; how he ought to live by looking at the dead Christ. In summary the mind will be more deeply enlightened the more it immerses itself in miracles that are neither seen nor understood, namely, that death means life, wounds heal, blood cleanses, sorrow brings happiness, lesions mend, the heights will become bright, spicy beverages will be imbibed, conflict resolved, what is lost will be fastened, those who are sick will receive medicine and the dead will bring the dead back to life.

5270 With respect to the emotions, there is nothing that can enflame our soul more strongly than vividly recalling Christ's Passion. St Bernard had this to say about this statement: "*O Lord Jesus, above everything you gave me back love by the chalice that you drank, that was the work of our redemption. You gave me more by redeeming me than you gave me by creating me. In creating me you gave me my own self, by redeeming me you gave me yourself. Therefore, if I own you everything for creating me, what can I give you for recreating me considering what such recreation implied? He says a bit further on: "I shall give what little I can, namely all of my soul and all my love: Lord Jesus, I ought to love you with my whole heart, with my entire mind and with all my strength."*" This was said by St Bernard.¹⁸

¹² Mk 15, 39

¹³ Cf. Gal 1, 4; 1 Cor 15; Rom 8, 1; 1 Pet 3, 18 etc.

¹⁴ Heb 5, 7.

¹⁵ Cf. Jn 12, 32.

¹⁶ Cf. 1 Cor 4, 9

¹⁷ Cf. 1 Cor 6, 20; 1 Pet 1, 8.

¹⁸ S. Bernardus, *Sermo. 20 in Cant.* N. 2-4 (PL 183, 867a-869a)

Once again, we are required to keep the holy Passion in mind continuously because though we are surrounded by all kinds of cruel enemies within, we will not be able to find a better defence or strategy than meditation on the Passion and death of the Son of God.

The Prince of the Apostles wanted to make us aware of this when he said: “*Christ therefore having suffered in the flesh, be you also armed with the same thoughts.* This means that as Christ has suffered such bitter torment the Christian soul ought to arm herself with meditation on the Passion.”¹⁹ When he mentions pondering the Apostle does not say “Dress yourself or adorn yourself but arm yourself since you not only have to resist enemies, but also defeat them and even overcome them.”

5271 When the Turks or anybody else suddenly appear at the walls, anyone who does not have weapons in his own home goes to the public arsenal or armoury that holds all kinds of weapons. In this way they not only put up resistance but also conquer the enemy. We ought to do the same thing that is we ought to have recourse to God’s arsenal or armoury in order to resist all our enemies. Thus once St Paul the Apostle has told us that our enemies are strong and daring with the words: “our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and the rulers of this world, against the spirits of wickedness who are in high places”,²⁰ he goes on to say what we ought to do in such a moment of need, and that is to have recourse to God’s arsenal: *Therefore, take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day and to stand in all things perfect.*²¹ The faithful soul ought to arm herself with such weapons if she wishes to rebut all the attacks of the enemy.

It is somewhat of a mystery how the prophet David says that Christ is full of power when he is hanging on the cross. *For you have been my hope, a tower of strength against the face of the enemy.*,²² that is “you are my hope and a tower of strength when I face the enemy”. With respect to this St Augustine said: “Therefore you should consider how is it that Christ has become our hope even though he suffered bitter torment and rose from death to life? If my heart experiences anguish, if I suffer tribulations and shame, he is the tower strength for me, if he goes away he will return to me and not only deflect the arrows of the enemy but what is more he will return them against the enemy. Be on guard my soul, do not allow yourself to be wounded by the enemy, flee to the tower. How can you do that? Recall Christ, his Passion and death and thus you will enter the tower,” This is what St Augustine said.²³

5272 What are we to say then concerning the great benefit that comes to the soul from meditating on Christ’s Passion? It is certain that anyone who occupies himself with such meditation will derive great benefit. As an illustration of this it says in the Book of Kings: *God blessed the house of Obbedom*,²⁴ because he provided a dwelling for the ark of God for three months. *Obbedom*²⁵ means servant of the man of blood, and it represents a person who meditates devoutly on Christ’s Passion, who

¹⁹ 1 Pet 4, 1

²⁰ Eph 6, 12

²¹ Eph 6, 13

²² Ps 60, 4.

²³ S. Augustinus, *Enarratio in ps. 60, 4-5.* (PL 36, 725s)

²⁴ 1Chron 13, 14

²⁵ Regarding the meaning of this name cf. *Enciclopedia della Bibbia* V, Torino, leumann 1971, 195.

is a man with a sanguine temperament, that is someone who is blood-stained, passionate, and wounded. What is beyond doubt is that whatever profit has come to God's friends, has come from the rich mine of the Passion. This blood tinted the cheeks of the very noble and saintly Agnes who said: "*His blood tinted my cheeks.*"²⁶ My Seraphic Father St Francis derived great benefit from this blood. Thus in the end he too became a blood stained person who received the stigmata and was crucified. The Seraphic Doctor, St Bonaventure had this in mind when he said: "Continual and devout meditation of Christ's most noble Passion will draw your mind and take it away from the concupiscence of the world and the flesh and elevate your heart to what it should be considering: speaking about, responding to, being silent about, acting upon and finally undertaking arduous and difficult things." He added a little further down: "Devout and assiduous recall and meditation on Christ's Passion will free you from all evil, fill you with all that is good, enrich you with grace in the present life and with glory in the future life."²⁷ Thus St Augustine says: "When a bad thought assails me I call Christ's wounds to mind. When the flesh assails and torments me I have recourse to the remembrance of my Lord's wounds. When the devil prepares traps for me I fly to the depths of my Lord's mercy and he leaves me immediately. If the tree of lust moves my limbs I dismiss this by recalling the wounds of my sweet Jesus. In all adversity I have never found a better remedy than Christ's wounds and I sleep safely and repose fearlessly in them." This is what Augustine said.²⁸

5273 The devout soul ought to keep such thoughts in mind in all situations and at all times. When you are eating consider a devout thought, dip a small piece of bread in Christ's heart. When you drink, think of the bitter gall that he drank on the cross. When you sleep place your head on top of his crown of thorns and place your body upon the length of his cross. O blessed is that soul who always holds the memory of Christ's Passion in his heart.

St Bonaventure says that it certain that a soul who dwells on the Passion and sufferings of Christ will reach the point where it does not think about itself or anything else except God and everywhere and at all times years recall the most sweet suffering Jesus and thus by desiring and contemplating him with vivid affection will be awash with most abundant tears of devotion and compassion and while weeping and languishing most sweetly will experience delight. Because of this it will want to carry the cross of Christ because he will be carrying in his heart the one who is holds heaven and earth. He will want to be crowned with thorns as Christ was crowned, and like him, to have a crown of glory prepared for him. He will want to be like Christ who felt the cold while naked on the cross and then to be warmed by the flame of his love. He will want to taste vinegar as Christ did and receive the pleasure of heavenly food from him. He will want to be nailed hands and feet to the cross as Christ was and to be loosened and set free from the wood of sin and the punishment that it brings with it He will want his side pierced like the side of Christ and to be cruelly scourged from head to foot and to have all the wounds healed by him with heavenly medicine. What more? He will want to be inflicted by all kinds of curses as Christ was and to be

²⁶ This phrase is taken from St Ambrose or is attributed to him. Cf. *AA SS. Januarii* 11, Paris [1863], 715s.

²⁷ Attributed to St Bonaventure but coming from Ugo di Balma. *Stimulus amoris*, pars. I, cap. 1. {*Operum t. VII*, Romae 1596, 206b-207a).

²⁸ S. Augustinus, *Liber meditationum*, c. 8 (PL 40, 907s)

blessed by Christ and his Heavenly Father, and honoured by the angels and, in her Son, to be adopted by the Most Blessed Virgin.”

5274 A little further on the same saint says: “Behold the shop of Paradise that is filled with all the perfumes and medicines is already open. Thus the devout soul enters through the windows of the wounds to find healing medicine that will restore, protect and preserve. This is where he will find the delicate preparations that he was looking for, and thus if you want to be uplifted and consoled by these honey sweet ointments do not defer entering these wounds. Behold the gate of paradise is open and Longinus’s versatile lance has been taken away. Behold the tree of life, that has been perforated both through the cross beam and the upright. If you do not put your feet into these holes, that means your emotions and your hands, you will not be able to savour their fruit. Behold the treasure of divine wisdom and eternal sweetness has been opened, so enter into the openings of the wounds and with paying a price you will most gently receive delight of the greatest sweetness. O how blessed was the lance and how blessed were the nails that merited to make those openings! O, if I had been that lance, I would have certainly never have wanted to leave that side and I would have said: “This is my resting place forever. I shall live here because you have chosen me.” What has been said here comes from St Bonaventure.²⁹

5275 Seeing that there are many valid reasons why the devout soul ought to meditate on and contemplate Christ’s Passion, as we have seen, how much time ought to be taken up with recalling it? Sacred Scripture says: *Remember the day.*³⁰ Do not remember just the day but the whole day. Including the night, so this may be a pleasing offering that God commanded the devout soul to perform from the rising of the sun to its setting as the Prophet Malachias says quite clearly: *For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and at every place there is a sacrifice offered to my name.*³¹ This means that “from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations and an oblation and most clean sacrifice is offered to my name. Most interpret these words as applying to the Eucharist. However, it is not inappropriate that for our purpose that we apply them to the continual remembrance of that we ought to have for the Son of God as he himself did in the words of Jeremiah: *Remember my poverty, and transgression, the wormwood and the gall.*³² This means, “my soul, remember my poverty and transgression, the wormwood and the gall.”

What appears to persuade us to undertake meditating each hour during the day is that the holy Evangelists when relating the history of the most holy Passion give minute details of the time of the events. *When the time had come they departed. Jesus knew that his hour had come. Could you not remain with me for an hour? He asked if it was possible for him to spend an hour with him. Behold the hour has come. This is your hour. Almost an hour had passed. Morning had come. It was the third hour and they crucified him. It was almost the sixth hour. At the sixth hour darkness fell until the ninth hour. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out. From the time that disciple took her*

²⁹ St Bonaventure, (attributed), *Stimulus amoris*, pars I cap. 1. (cit., 207ab).

³⁰ Deut 16, 3

³¹ Mal 1, 11

³² Lam 3, 19

into his home.³³ These quotes and others where the Evangelists mention the hours demonstrate that we should call to mind what the blessed Christ was suffering at that hour.

5276 It is certain, that if you carefully observe events, that in the whole course of his most bitter Passion the most patient Christ never had a minute's rest. At one moment he was being betrayed, at another arrested, at another bound, or someone struck him, mocked him, shouted at him, insulted him, annoyed him, bothered him. One shouted false witness, another told lies, and another was blaspheming. One spat on him, another covered his face, another hit his cheek. One clothed him in purple, another stripped him, mocked him, others flogged him. Others crowned him with thorns; others knelt in front of him to make fun of him. He was greeted and hit, threatened and committed to judgement by a tribunal. He was sent before Annas, from Annas to Caiaphas, from Caiaphas to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod and from Herod back to Pilate, going from tribunal to tribunal. The leaders turned against him, the crowd shouted, rascals manhandled him. When he had been burdened with the cross, covered with mud and was full of nauseating and fetid spittle, he gushed sweat and blood, and ascended Calvary and in the end instead of resting on a deathbed he was fixed to a hard cross with piercing thorns, with nails rather than feathers, with gall for nourishment, vinegar for drink and death by way of repose.

So then if the Son of God was distressed and tormented for us every minute of the hour, this is a good reason for the soul who feels thankful for so many gifts to remember every hour of the day how much he suffered for her.

The Author's Intention

5277 After I had thought carefully about these matters, I decided to divide the whole history of the Passion into twenty-four parts so that at each hour a soul would have something to recall concerning her spouse and say: *I shall be mindful and remember, and my soul shall languish within me.*³⁴ That means "I shall recall him with my memory and because of the strength of my sorrow my soul will become languid," and below you will find material that has been prepared already.

Since noble persons are accustomed to wear a watch on their person which chimes or at least indicates the time, so that they can to know the time and how much of the day is left for their work, so too the devout soul should always carry 24 meditations in his heart. Because of this I chose the title: *A Spiritual Clock of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

It is a lucky soul who delights in seeking to know what the Lord did hour by hour, where was he, what was he suffering, and if the soul is suffering from anxiety or is upset, he may shed a tear over what the Author of life suffered because of him. It is certain that if he has accompanied him in suffering and sorrow, he will also be with him in the happiness of heaven as the Apostle said: *If you are partakers in the sufferings, so shall you also be of the consolation.*³⁵

³³ This is a collection of Gospel quotes concerning Christ's Passion that specifies the "hours" of the Passion. Cf. in order Lk 22, 14; Jn 13, 1; 17, 1; Mt 26, 40; Mk 14, 35, 41; Lk 22, 53, 59, 66; Mk 15, 25, 33; Mt 27, 45; Lk 23, 44; Jn 19, 27.

³⁴ Lam 3, 20

³⁵ 2 Cor 1, 7

22nd Hour: One of the soldiers opened his side with a spear and immediately there came out blood and water ³⁶

5278 O devout soul you will not have to wait much longer. Soon you will be able to enter the heart of Christ because he has opened the door for you. So stop being afraid of your enemies, fly from their predatory hands and like a simple dove build your nest in meditations on the wounds of the good Jesus, especially the wound in his side, as the words of the Canticum invite you to do: *My dove in the clefts of the rock in the hollow places in the wall.*” ³⁷ Today Longinus opens the side with a lance as the Evangelist says: *One of the soldiers opened his side.*

One cannot deny that this lance was very lucky because by contact with the Lord’s precious body it gave birth to all the dignity and riches of the instruments of the Passion. What instrument ever penetrated as far within as the steel of the lance? It is true that the scourges touched the skin directly and brought out blood: the thorns went into the head a little more deeply: the nails passed through the nerves: the cross was bathed with blood. However, you, O precious iron, penetrated the most intimate part of the sacred body. *The lance opened his side.*

Tell me, blessed lance, what were you searching for in that heart? Was it perhaps the Apostles? They had fled. Was it life? However, he was dead. Was it the soul? This had gone to Limbo. I know what you were looking for. You were searching for the sacraments and see how instead of a lance you became a key: *It opened, says the text, his side.* It should have said: *it wounded his side* since it is the nature of a lance to wound not to open. St Augustine said that this lance changed its function, because it changed its function to becoming a key that opened. Therefore, we receive from the open side the treasures of the holy sacraments. ³⁸

5279 *It opened his side.* Christ’s sacred humanity was our real ark that was better than Noah’s ark by means of which we were preserved from the waters of the flood. Just as Noah opened the window of the ark to let the dove come in,³⁹ so Christ opened his side so that we, like the dove, could enter to meditate on his great love. Such love had never been heard of. To explain it St John said: *opened* and not *wounded*.

What the lance did was indeed a stroke of love. When the hammers struck the nails, these were thumps of death as death was trying to overcome Christ. However, the stroke of the lance was not a death blow since death had already won. It was a blow of love which in order to put death, which had already retreated into the fortress of the rock, to death, moved the lance to the rib as its sheath.

In fact, the iron of the lance, which the Church called cruel, *was done purposely to make us clear.* ⁴⁰ It is not as if this was done out of hatred. It was an act of heartfelt love. Therefore, it speaks of love just as those in love speak when they call their

³⁶ Jn 19, 34

³⁷ Cant. 2, 14

³⁸ S. Augustinus, *Tract. 120 in Joannis Evangelium*, n. 2 (PL 35, 1953)

³⁹ Cf. Gen 8, 6

⁴⁰ These words come from the Hymn *Vexilla Regis prodeunt*, in the liturgy of the cross for Good Friday.

beloved cruel. This is not out of hatred but from heartfelt love. So too the Church is most ardently in love with the instruments of the Passion. She loves the cross; she loves the nails; she loves the thorns; she loves the lance with which Christ's heart was pierced on the cross. Therefore, as if he was wounded once again by that iron, she cries:⁴¹ *it was done purposely to make us clean.*

5280 The iron of the lance is said to be cruel because it wounded both the living and the dead, something that the other instruments of the Passion did not do. The lance pierced the dead Christ and left little life in his Mother. This knock hit her and as she lamented this she said: "It ought to have been enough for you, O cruel ones, to have tortured my most beloved Son with nails and thorns and finally to have imposed such a cruel death on him, without later on wanting to make his body bleed cruelly after he was dead." *It was done purposely to make us clean.* Captain Joab fired three spears into only Absalom,⁴² but Longinus with only one lance wounded three living persons: the heart-broken mother, beloved John and the fervent Magdalene, who were standing at the foot of the cross. *A lance opened his side.*

It was necessary for Christ to be pierced by the lance or else the blow would have been aimed at us, since God held the lance of his anger in his hand. When he threw the lance it plunged into Christ, and we were saved. This is like what happened to Saul, who when he threw a lance to strike David, David moving his body drew it aside and the lance stuck in the wall.⁴³ O how true it is that God threw the lance of his anger against the human race with the arm of strict justice, but it stuck in the wall striking Christ's side which was the wall of our soul and so the human race was saved. *His side was opened by a lance.*

5281 If the lance had not opened Christ's side how would we have obtained his riches and the price of our redemption? Explaining the meaning of the words of the psalm *You have cut my sackcloth and compasses me with gladness.*⁴⁴ St Augustine said: *Let it not upset you to hear the words my sackcloth, because there is also mentions of the price. Sackcloth is an allegory for sins of the flesh. The sackcloth is hoisted up and the sinner appeared to be happy. The persecutor pierced the sack with a lance and the price of our redemption flowed.* This means do not think that when Christ uses the word sack that this is something contemptible since the price that was paid for you was included in it. His sack was an image of sinful flesh. This sack was placed upon the cross and the evil Jews seemed to enjoy it. The persecutor ruptured the sack with a lance and the Redeemer poured forth the price of our salvation⁴⁵ *His side was opened by a lance.*

St Hilary said that just as Eve was formed from Adam's side, so too the Church was formed from Christ's side.⁴⁶ This means that when blood and water flowed from the sacred side it was very miraculous because liquid blood and clear water cannot flow from a dead body. However, since liquid flowed in abundance, this had to be a special miracle for it was real blood and water and not uncongealed phlegm.

⁴¹ This reasoning is developed more intensely by Br Tommaso da Olera. Cf. further on *nn.* 5365-5366

⁴² Cf. 2 Sam 18, 14

⁴³ Cf. 1 Sam 19, 10

⁴⁴ Ps 29, 12 (*Vulg.*)

⁴⁵ S. Augustinus, *Sermo 336*, cap. 4 (*PL 38*, 1437)

⁴⁶ This quot could not be found in *PL 9-10.*

5282 St Capistrano⁴⁷ said that from Christ's side the stream came forth which gushes water in paradise, and that blood and water came out to prove the truth of the human nature that had been assumed in conformity with what St John said: "There are Three who gave testimony on earth, the spirit and the water and the blood."⁴⁸ There are two ways in which this signifies the Church since it was founded and washed by Christ's blood. Both these actions are accomplished in Baptism This Sacrament is conferred using water and Christ's blood makes it effective. This signifies two of the main sacraments among the seven that we celebrate. Water signifies Baptism and blood the Eucharist. *His side was opened by a lance.*

As this blessed door is something that is so important, God wanted it to be foreshadowed by many images from antiquity. The first of these was the door or window which God ordered Noah to install in the ark so that by going through it the animals would not perish in the waters of the flood. This was a symbol of Christ's open side, as St Augustine said.⁴⁹ As the ark saved the world from the waters of the flood, so too the ark of Christ's humanity saved our souls from the waters of sin, and therefore he had to make a door or window, and here indeed it was. *His side was opened by a lance.*

The second symbol was the forming of Eve from Adam's rib⁵⁰ while he was sleeping. Once more St Augustine says that the Church was made from Christ's rib and the Church is much more truly the mother of the living than was Eve.⁵¹ The third symbol comes from Exodus and Numbers where it says that the water flowed abundantly from the rock that had been struck. So too when Christ's side had been struck by the lance, blood and water flowed out, so that thirsty souls might drink as St Paul said: "And they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ."⁵²

5283 The fourth symbol is the one mentioned in Ezekiel where he saw water coming out of the right side of the temple.⁵³ We note here that the Prophet came to deep water by progressing through various levels so that at first the water came up to his ankles, then to his knees, then to his loins, and then to his chest, and finally if he had wished to go any further it would have gone over his head and he would have drown. This river signifies Christ's Passion as David said in the person of Christ when he wrote these words: "Save me, O God, for the waters have come in even unto my soul."⁵⁴ However it is a fact that such a river had more levels of depth. The first reached the ankle and this was when the blessed Christ washed the feet of his disciples.⁵⁵ The second level reached the knees, and this took place in the garden when, as the evangelist says, the blessed Christ wanted to pray, and *he fell to his knees.*⁵⁶ The third level reached the loins, and this took place at the scourging. The

⁴⁷ S, Capistranus (attrib.) *Sermo de passione Domini* (sya the author). Instead see *Epistola LXIII* n. 8) *PL* 4. 390s).

⁴⁸ Cf. 1 Jn 5, 7-8.

⁴⁹ S. Augustinus, *Tract. 120 in Joan. Evang.* nn. 2-3 (*PL* 35, 1953)

⁵⁰ Cf. Gen. 2, 21-22

⁵¹ Cf. Gen. 3, 30. For the quote from St Augustine see n. 4.

⁵² Ex 17, 1-7; Num 26, 11; 1 Cor. 19, 4.

⁵³ Cf Ez 47, 1

⁵⁴ Ps. 68, 2 (*Vulg.*)

⁵⁵ Cf. Jn 13, 5-15

⁵⁶ Mt 26, 39; Mk 14, 35; Lk 22, 41.

fourth level reached the chest, and this was when his side was opened by a lance. The fifth level was when his head was crowned with thorns as David said: "I have come into the depths of the sea, and a tempest has overwhelmed me".⁵⁷ This was so because having seen the depth of the water, like Ezekiel, he could not turn back. He said to his Apostles *Rise let us go*.⁵⁸

However, the water that flowed from the right side of the temple is of special importance. With reference to this mystery St John says: *A lance opened his side and blood and water flowed out*. Christ himself said: *Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again. He said this of the temple of his body*.⁵⁹

5284 The fourth symbol was Absalom who was struck in the chest with many arrows. In many ways Absalom was a figure of Christ. Just as he was exceedingly beautiful so that there was not a blemish⁶⁰ on his whole body, David said of Christ, that he was more beautiful than all the sons of men. It is said that the women of Jerusalem bought the hair of Absalom in weighty amounts.⁶¹ Christ's merits adorn Christian souls and they buy it with tears and sighs. If the death of Absalom brought peace to the kingdom,⁶² Christ's death brought about peace between heaven and earth. The heart of Absalom was pierced by three arrows,⁶³ Christ's heart was pierced by only one lance that was thrust three times and that wounded three hearts, the heart of Christ, the heart of his Mother and the heart of John.

The sixth symbol is the cluster of grapes that was carried by the three men who explored the Promised Land.⁶⁴ When the grapes were crushed they yielded a plentiful amount of wine. Christ is like a bunch of grapes that came from heaven, and after he had been placed on the press of the cross, he yielded abundant blood and water. The Canticle had this to say concerning this bunch: *A cluster of cypress my love is to me, in the vineyards of Engaddi*.⁶⁵ That means that my beloved is like a cluster of grapes in Engaddi's vineyard. The Hebrew text which says *my love is a bundle of camphor and propitiation* makes us wonder, because in fact the blood and water that were shed by Christ are what brought propitiation from heaven. *His side was opened, and blood and water flowed out*.

5258 St Cyril⁶⁶ says that at the time of Moses the first symbols were blood and water, since the rivers were turned into blood and the stones to water and the final symbol that we see in Jesus himself is nothing other than blood and water. Also, with respect to Jesus himself the first symbols were blood and water: blood at his circumcision and water at the wedding at Cana in Galilee. At the end he wanted us to see these same signs of blood and water. *Blood and water flowed out*.

⁵⁷ Ps 68, 3 (*Vulg.*)

⁵⁸ Mt 26, 46

⁵⁹ Jn 2, 19, Mt 26, 61; Mk 14, 58

⁶⁰ Cf. 2 Sam 14, 25

⁶¹ Cf. 2 Sam 14, 26

⁶² Cf. 2 Sam 19

⁶³ Cf. note 43

⁶⁴ Cf. Num 13, 23-24

⁶⁵ Song 1, 13.

⁶⁶ S. Cyrillus, *Catech.* 13, n 20-21 (*PG* 33, 7981)

Blood and water were the symbols that demonstrated the efficacy of Christ's Passion because in ancient times the expiation for sin was brought about only by the shedding of blood; to such an extent that Paul said: "without the shedding of blood there is no remission."⁶⁷ The great Baptist came after him and he performed baptism with water alone. Later during his Passion Christ was to show that he embraced both blood and water as the most comprehensive symbol and therefore blood and water flowed from his side.

Theophilus⁶⁸ said that Longinus' lance symbolises the sword of the Cherub who stands at the gate of heaven. Just the same as the lance wounded Christ's side so too that sword ceased to wound as soon as Christ's side was opened and that this is an obvious symbol showing that the gate of heaven is no longer closed but wide-open. The Cherub's sword was made of forged iron. To blunt the sharpness of its edge and to extinguish the fire blood and water flowed from Christ's side since nothing could blunt the edge of the sword as effectively as blood nor was there anything that could extinguish the fire as well as water. *Blood and water.*

5286 Who knows if he did not do this to make it clear to us that neither anger nor contempt reigned in his heart any longer? Anger is nothing else but the heating of blood around the heart so that the fuel that ignites anger is blood that is within the heart and consequently when this fuel is exhausted anger is taken away. Therefore, in order to show that he not only held no anger in his heart but that he did not even have the fuel to ignite it, Christ wanted to shed his blood. *Blood and water came out.*

Zacharias said: "On that day there shall be a fountain open to the house of David, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem for the washing of the sinner, and of the unclean woman."⁶⁹ Behold the open spring, behold the water, and the blood in abundance so that all the faults of Adam's family may be washed. This is where Magdalene, Peter, Paul and the good thief were washed, where all of us may be washed. Why do we not all run to be washed?

St Gregory⁷⁰ said: "Why are we so lazy, frightened and cold since we know that very many have been washed in this spring? Why do we not confidently search with all diligence for the spring of mercy, which was closed up to the present but has now been opened and yet we do not care? "Yes, yes, my soul, try to approach this spring, where you will not only find blood and water to wash and make yourself beautiful, but will also discover the fire of divine love to warm yourself, seeing as this was the reason why he wanted to open his side to show the great love he had for you. O great love, O infinite love! O, my sweet Jesus, set me on fire with the fire of your love so that I may love you with all my heart, and may there be no part of me that you have not inflamed. *Amen.*

⁶⁷ Heb 9, 22

⁶⁸ Teofilatio, *Enarratio in Evang Joannis* cap. 19 (PG 124, 282s).

⁶⁹ Zach 13, 1

⁷⁰ S. Gregorius, *Hom. 8 in Ezechielem*, lib. II, n. 20-21 (PL76, 1040)

21st Hour: Mary is filled with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Day

*And suddenly there came the sound of a mighty Spirit coming and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.*⁷¹

5287 1. In the first place think about what Mary was doing while she was waiting in the Cenacle with the Apostles and the other disciples for the coming of the Holy Spirit. We learn, from the Acts of the Apostles, that they were gathered together in prayer apart from the others in that place. All these facts teach us that we should be prepared to receive the Holy Spirit.

The first requirement is that we should be united with one another, that is be at peace with one another and not just not hating someone for, in fact, this would close the door to the coming of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary we ought to love each other, since as the Saviour taught *he who abides in charity, God abides in him.*⁷² Indeed, charity and love are the identity card, badge or even the insignia of God's children as St John says: *By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*⁷³

The other requirement is that we remain apart from the uproar of the world, fly from wicked practices and talk, from which nothing that is good can ever come, because imitating the kind of persons with whom we associate, we become good when we associate with good people and bad when we associate with bad people. Thus, we ought to flee from whatever is an impediment to receiving the Holy Spirit, and diligently try to remain detached so that in solitude and withdrawal we allow the Lord to visit. *I will lead her into the wilderness: and I will speak to her heart.*⁷⁴

5288 When God wanted to speak to Moses in secret and communicate his favours, he commanded him to come away from the crowd and go up the mountain,⁷⁵ in order to make us understand that we have to do the same if we wish to receive favours from God. Many holy fathers did this by flying from the noise of the world and withdrawing to the desert. Many, many religious have experienced this when they took flight from the world and entered cloisters and monasteries. Anyone who wishes to enjoy God has to do this; he has to detach himself as much as possible from everything and try to fix his mind on God with all diligence. My father St Francis was an outstanding teacher in this regard. He not only withdrew from the world and business transactions, but also withdrew quietly from cloisters themselves and went to hide alone in bitter deserts so that he could enjoy God with more peace of mind.⁷⁶

Finally, it is required that the person pray. By doing this he demonstrates that he desires so great a favour as the gift of the Holy Spirit. He should ask for this in prayer and by praying make himself partially worthy to receive it. God said to David: *open*

⁷¹ Act 2,2, This meditation is taken from the *Horologio spirituale soprs tutti iprincipali misteri della della vita della gloriosa Vergine Maria Madre di Dio.*

⁷² This expression is taken from the well known liturgical canticle and is reproduced as is is stated in 1 Jn 4, 16

⁷³ Jn 13, 35.

⁷⁴ Hosea 2, 14

⁷⁵ Cf. Ex 3, 1-2; 19,3; 24, 1-2; 34, 3.

⁷⁶ CA 13, 40; (FAED, II, p. 128 141) 2 MP 62 (FAED III,p. 306)

your mouth wide and I will fill it. ⁷⁷ This means that he who desires to hope for the things of heaven will be comforted by God. Opening the mouth is done by those who are very hungry. *Therefore, open your mouth.* Burning sight and ardent desires will come out of the heart of the person who has a great longing for heavenly things. At times his words will be filled with fire. This was true of the ejaculatory prayers of the saints. Scripture, specially the Psalms, is full of such prayers,

This was the case with Mary and the Apostles and those who were with them in the Cenacle as they waited for the Holy Spirit to come.

5289 2. Consider the actual coming of the Holy Spirit on the glorious Virgin and the other fortunate companions who had come together. Scripture says about this group: *When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all gathered in the one place when suddenly there came from heaven the sound of a strong wind which filled the whole place where they were seated.*

O how fortunate they were since they were filled with the Holy Spirit and if they had loved God before this, after this had happened they were all on fire with love. St Thomas says: *Grace is a certain sharing in the divine nature.* ⁷⁸ Now if one measure of grace causes the soul to share in the divine nature what will so much grace achieve? What will the fullness of the Holy Spirit do in a soul? What took place because of the privileged circumstances of this gift was that many souls were transformed completely into God. Because of this someone said: *I live now not I but Christ lives in me.* ⁷⁹ Thus, it was that my seraphic Father St Francis who was so transformed through the vehemence of love into his beloved crucified Christ that he too was marked with the stigmata. This is how it was with a certain person who rejected all other earthly consolation and rejoiced in God alone. *My soul refused to be comforted, I remembered my God, and was delighted.* ⁸⁰ In summary, when a soul is in God's grace, according to the degree of grace that has been given to her, she shares in God's nature and is transformed into God.

5290 Consider the special action of the Holy Spirit in Mary's heart. Although she was already full of grace, as the Angel said with the words *hail full of grace* ⁸¹ still in the coming of the Holy Spirit this was replenished. The more grace her blessed soul received the greater was its capacity to receive more grace. Not only does one grace not impede another but it renders the soul able and prepared to receive more graces. If a soul gains merit in proportion to the degree of grace that it has been given how can a soul who is full of grace receive more grace? Proverbs says: *"But the path of the just, as a shining light, goes forward and increases even to perfect day.* ⁸² Along with this, all the saints always grew in grace and merit because gaining grace comes to fulfilment only in heaven. Let us say this much concerning the most glorious Virgin who was full of grace from the outset and who was also always receiving more grace that she always cooperated with the grace that she received. However, hear on earth

⁷⁷ Ps 80, 11 (*Vulg.*)

⁷⁸ S. Th. II-II, q. 112

⁷⁹ Gal 2, 20

⁸⁰ Ps 76, 3-4.

⁸¹ Lk 1, 28

⁸² Pr 4, 19.

and while she was a wayfarer she never ceased to receive grace so that she was always growing in grace.

Gifted with such an abundance of grace, all kinds of other gifts increased in her. We know that she had the gifts of wisdom, intellect, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and the fear of the Lord. All the virtues grew in her to a wonderful degree where she became a picture of all the virtues. Because of this it was reasonable that some were moved to see her as a novel marvel that had appeared in the heaven of the Church. St Ignatius says: *As we believe in faith, Mary the mother of the humanity of Jesus possessed an angelic nature. This moves our hearts very deeply and makes us want to behold her image. If we do this, we shall behold a heavenly marvel and a very holy spectacle.*⁸³ In one who was more divine than human, the abundance of grace and the gifts of the Holy Spirit transformed her completely into God, and although she was a human creature like us, grace made her appear to be divine.

5291 4. Consider of the wisdom of blessed Christ when he left his most holy Mother on earth after his glorious ascension so that for a period of time she could instruct the Apostles about many things and become the one to tell them about only what she could have known. St Anselm said: *The conversation between the Virgin and his Apostles after his Ascension was both useful and necessary. For even though they had learnt about all that was true by the revelation of the Holy Spirit, it was imperative for them to understand how more incomparable, eminent and manifest was the profundity of the truth which the Holy Spirit had revealed to them. To achieve this much would be revealed to them by the Virgin since in her this was not simply the knowledge but the experience of the mysteries of Christ,*⁸⁴

From this we can see that the sun and the moon do not shine at the same time. The sun shines first during the day. When he goes he leaves us the moon to shed its rays. In the sky of the Church it was not right for the two great lights, Christ and Mary, to shine at the same time so that when we could see Christ he could spread his light at large. When he had gone, Mary, the moon, remained with us to illumine our darkness and fears. This is why St Ignatius calls her the mistress of our religion.

We should ponder on what St Rupert the Abbot had to say concerning the words of St Matthew: *From here on, that is following the Ascension, it was time for the Virgin to speak to her friends, the holy Apostles and those to whom she could not speak before.*⁸⁵ The most holy Virgin taught the Apostles themselves, who were the Church leaders, the very ones whom God had chosen, so that, by means of the light of what they taught, the world might be enlightened. They were the ones to whom Christ had said; *you are the light of the world.*⁸⁶ That she taught them shows that they had become the disciples of our most wise mistress.

5292 What did she teach them? Rupert said: *“What they could not understand at first.”*⁸⁷ So these were the things that Mary taught the holy Apostles: things that were important: things that were profound mysteries. They were things which while the

⁸³ S, Ignatius (pseudo.) Epist. Ad Joan. (PG 5, 943s)

⁸⁴ Cf. in the works of Bernardo Eadmeris monachi cant., *Lib. De excell. Virginis*, cap. 7 (PL 159, 571).

⁸⁵ Ruperto di Deutz. *De Gloria et honore Filii hominis super Matthaum*, lib. II (PL 168, 1340)

⁸⁶ Mt 5, 14

⁸⁷ Jn 16, 2.

master of life himself was alive the Apostles were not able to fathom or understand. He wished to make them clear from the lips of his most holy Mother.

However, my dear Lord, is it possible that your most holy Mother's mouth is wiser, more learned and alert than your mouth so that it could teach the Apostles and those who had laboured for a long time under your instructions? If this is not the case, why did you leave the instruction of the Apostles, who were such exalted ministers, to the mouth of a teacher when you knew that to understand such things the coming of the Holy Spirit was required?

Because of this fact the world can underran the great things that the blessed Christ left in the heart of his most blessed Mother. To grasp this the Apostles needed strength from heaven. Christ said that it would take time before they understood: *till you be clothed with power from heaven.* ⁸⁸

What a great thing! Christ taught his doctrine for the space the three and a half years. From then onwards, and even to the end of the world, there no other faith has been taught other than what the martyrs defended by shedding their blood. Now if he taught that great doctrine for only three and a half years how much more doctrine, mysteries and sacraments would he have spoken about to his most holy Mother during the thirty years before this and also during the three and a half years? O blessed Lady! O most enlightened Mistress of the entire Church!

⁸⁸ Lk 24, 49.