

## ***GOOD FRIDAY REFLECTIONS***



### ***The Liturgical Symbolism of the Pierced One***

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**[Electronic Edition]**

***GOOD FRIDAY REFLECTIONS******The Liturgical Symbolism of the Pierced One*****Outline**

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## **GOOD FRIDAY REFLECTIONS**

### ***The Liturgical Symbolism of the Pierced One***

... They will look on **the One they have pierced...**! [Jn 12:10]

...Amen! Look, He is coming on the clouds, everyone will see Him, even **those who have pierced Him** – all the races of the earth will mourn over Him ...[Rv 1:7].

... over the House of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, I shall pour out a spirit of grace and prayer, and they will look to Me. **They will mourn for the One they have pierced.** They will mourn for Him as people weep for a first-born child. What that day comes, the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as for Hadad Rimmon, in the Plain of Megiddo [Armageddon??] [where the young King Josiah died in Battle trying to restore the Reign in Israel – cf. 2 Ch 35:22 – cf. sudden deaths of Presidents Roosevelt and Kennedy!] ... When that day comes, *a fountain will be opened for the House of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to wash sin and impurity away...* [Zc 12:10-13:1].

### **Introduction**

**[1]** While these texts were incomparably developed in one of the most beautiful Encyclicals of all time, *Haurietis Aquas*, by Pius XII, in the spring of 1956 – this is a document that stills bears reading, contemplation. It remains an outstanding example of the late Pope's 'spiritual reading of the bible'.

**[2]** The symbolism through Scripture of this idea is almost tiring simply to list it:

- the Genesis 'Flood Gates' of a new Creation [cf. Gn 7:11];
- this is the new Gate of Heaven [cf. Rv 19:11] –the sanctuary Gates of Heaven;
- Noah's Ark now opened for a new beginning of Creation;
- the Water Gate, through which the procession would move to celebrate the harvest in the fall [SUKKOTH]
- the Sheep Gate of Jn 10;
- the Tabernacle of the Trinity;
- The Wedding Chamber of the Song of Songs - young lovers peer through the lattice to get a look at each other;
- we are hidden in the clefts of the Rock of Ages like the lover in Songs [Sgs 2:14];
- I opened to my love... [Sgs 5:6]
- only the Immolated Lamb can open the scrolls [cf. Rv 20:12]
- the Torn Veil for Jn is the Opened Side of the New Temple [cf. Jn2]
- this is the birth of the Second Eve;

- the symbolism for the Holy Spirit, Baptism and Eucharist;
- the inexhaustible streams of salvation of Is 12:3;
- the Pierced side and the open tombs in the Resurrection [Mt 27];
- the Heavens pierced in the Transfiguration like the side of Christ for a new divine message [cf. Lk 3 p.];
- the Door of Faith [cf. Ac 14:23];
- Prison Gates are torn asunder [ Ac 16:27];
- Ezechiel's vision of the Desert Temple and iets flowing streams out of the right side [cf. Ezk 47];
- Wisdom opens the mouth of the dumb in sacred eloquence [cf. Ws 10:21]

**[3]** The opened side of Christ provides a 'hay-day' for the mystics of the Church – cf. St. Gertrude of the Great in the Middle Ages, and the Stigmatine Founder, St. Gaspar Bertoni – in his Easter Sermon, April 5, 1807, he quoted the Medieval scholar, Cornelius a Lapide : ... if you wish to find me, look for me in the wound in the side of Christ. There I will stay and there it will be easy to find me. Elsewhere, you will search in vain... [In mystical language, St. Gaspar was referring to his preferred area of his personal contemplation – to pierce through contemplation into the side of Christ in the Resurrection].

**[4]** A Holy Communion: one of the reasons for the establishment of the Communion Sacrifice - as is typified in the tragedy of Cain and Abel [cf. Gn 4], there was a struggle between brothers, Farmers and Shepherds: the former needed undisturbed land and the latter needed grazing – they would often draw up a Covenant of peaceful Agreement.

**[a]** This may be reflected in the Farmers' Celebration of the Unleavened Bread [in the Spring] – as the Shepherds would hand over for sacrifice a young, unblemished Lamb. The Good Shepherd would likewise lay down His life [Jn 10]. The same holds for the autumn of the year: there would be the Ritual of the Procession through the Water-gate for the Farmers praying for benevolent winter rains - and the Shepherds would 'hunker down' for the winter, through the Sheep-gate, gathering the flock into the for protection.

**[b]** There seems to be evidence of this union, harmony of the Blood and Water that followed in abundance from the Pierced Side of Christ: for the farmer, the Planting Season was a week's ceremony, of unleavened bread – and the oblation of a Lamb for the Shepherd. The fall of the year, would exhibit a liturgical week of In-

gathering [SUKKOTH], Tents and Tabernacles – where the participants would live until the harvest was in.<sup>1</sup>

[c] Even a rapid survey<sup>2</sup> of the table of contents on John's Book of Signs [Jn 1-12] shows the following possible Liturgical observances, beginning with Jn 5:

- Jesus on the Sabbath [Jn 5]
- Jesus at Passover [Jn 6]
- Jesus at Tabernacles and its aftermath [Jn 7-10: 21 – concluding with Good Shepherd – the Sheep Gate]
- Jesus at Dedication [Jn 10:22-39].

[5] Could there not be a profound connection – supernatural development –from the Devotion to the Sacred Heart and that of Mercy Sunday?

**A. New Life in the Spring: The Liturgy of Sacrificial Blood:**  
**AMEN!!!!**

... Here we have an anchor for our soul ... Reaching right through, beyond the veil ... beyond the Second Veil, called the Holy of Holies ... **a living opening through the Curtain**, that is, **His Body** ...[cf. Heb 6:19; 9:3; 10:20]

†††

**1312: ...If you wish to see me, look for me in the wound of the side of Christ. For it is there that I dwell; and here it will be easy to find me. You will search in vain in any other place.**

[St. Gaspar Bertoni - For 'Low' Sunday, April 5, 1807 - Verona, in St. Paul's of Campo Marzio].

**# 1771: His side, opened after His death, is used to show us that Heart, that same Heart wounded by the lance, that WOUND RETAINED IN HIS GLORIOUS BODY**, render the Heart so sweet, evident, divine, so much so that it is impossible to venerate ***the Wounded Heart without remembering and venerating His immense love*** [St, Gaspar Bertoni, Stigmatine Founder - Sermon on Sacred Heart]

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Innocenzo Cardellini, *I sacrifici dell' Antica Alleaza. Tipologia, Rituali, Celebrazioni*. Milano. Ed San Paolo 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Raymond Brown, *The Gospel of John. I-XII*. Doubleday [Yale Press]; Anchor Bible 2008, pp. Xi, ff.

**The Sacred Side -**  
**The Liturgy of Blood – The Sacrificial Lamb**

**Introduction**

**1. THE SYMBOLISM OF THE GRAIN OF WHEAT:**

This chapter 12 of John presents the episode of the Greeks who would like to see Jesus, leads right into the discourse of the “hour” of the glorification of the Son of Man (v 23). Then follows three verses (24-26) that present the grain of wheat falling into the ground, which must die. The passage ends with the prayer of Jesus, very like the prayer of the Synoptics present in Gethsemane – and His declaration that He has come into the world for the purpose of glorifying the Father.

In this discourse, Jesus gives an outline of what it means to be a disciple – it will imply, like the Companions of the Lamb in the Apocalypse (cfr Rv 14:4), following Him wherever He is. The true disciple is asked to follow Him through to the very end.

The “grain of wheat”, first of all is Jesus. This symbol of the grain of wheat is not far removed from the insistence on the Unleavened Bread, the celebration of a new springtime (cf. 1 Co 5:7, ff.). One almost naturally will make the association that the impending death of Jesus will also bestow manna in the desert (cfr Ex 16:4, ff.; Jn 6:32, ff.) – and there will be a new celebration of the Feast of Azymes.<sup>3</sup>

**2. IT IS BETTER THAT ONE SHOULD DIE FOR THE PEOPLE (cfr Jn 11:50)**

From plant life, a rather indifferent, unwitting prophecy: “it is better” that someone should die, rather than the witness the destruction of the whole people. The misguided “assembly” of high priests and Pharisees greatly feared for the “people” and the “place”, perhaps meaning the Holy City. The idea of the “place” appears back in the discourse with the Woman of Samaria, where the Woman identifies the “place” of worship to be Jerusalem (cfr Jn 4:20). The “place”, too, could mean the temple.

Caiphas seemed to fear public disorder – but John is careful to point out that Caiphas was not speaking in his own name, but particularly in his role as high priest (cfr Jn 11:51).

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<sup>3</sup> cfr. Nokter Fuglister, *Il valore salvifico della pasqua*. Brescia: Paideia 1976, pp. 123, ff.

Knowingly, these passages are full of eschatological overtones: the great fears being expressed for the people and the city (cf. Is 43:5; Jr 33:3; Ezk 34:12). The prophets saw the “dispersed” streaming back to Zion, the Holy City, or Mount Zion (cfr Is 2:2, f.; 60:3, ff.). Zechariah (cfr 14:16, ff.) saw them all coming home at the end of time for a grandiose celebration of Tabernacles. Ezechiel had promised the lord would maintain His sanctuary among them (cf. Ezk 36:24, ff.).

John shows that the death of Jesus is not only for the flock of His own fold, but has come for all. Everyone who will accept Him will be welcomed into the one fold by the One Shepherd (cf. Jn 10:16).

The effects of Jesus’ redemptive death were far broader than the “nation” the high priest mentioned in his prophecy. Far more than protecting the sacred precincts of a stone temple, this Temple would be destroyed, but built right back up again in three days in the Resurrection. As He shared the water and the bread, making believers in Him participate in His own mission – so, likewise, His followers can beam in His light. All who receive the light are empowered to be the children, the heirs of God (cfr Jn 1:12). Jesus’ mission is universal – the flock He has in view are each human being created, redeemed by God. At the last supper, in his “Yom Kippur” prayer, Jesus prayed for Himself, as high priest – for the other priests, the apostles – and for all who would ever come to believe in Him (cfr Jn 17:21).

### **3. THE GOOD SHEPHERD (cf. Jn 10):**

With even more clarity, the symbolism presents a well known OT type. Here, there is great emphasis on His “call” (cfr Jn 10:3, f., 200, and His willingness to offer Himself (cfr Jn 10:11). This “oblation” of His is totally free. In Trinitarian terms, the Father “loves” the Son because He carries out the mission of obedience to the divine will of merciful redemption. In Good Shepherd terms, the Father loves Him because He lays down His life for the sheep.

The Shepherd symbolism surely goes back to the “Pierced One of Zechariah” (cfr Zc 10:3; 11:15, ff.) – and goes forward to the scene on Calvary. It is after the death of Jesus that John applies the prophecy to Him (cfr Jn 19:27) – whereas the Synoptics present Jesus reciting the prophecy concerning the “Striking the Shepherd” from Zechariah on the way from the Last Supper to the Garden of Olives. There may also be a lesson for the apostles in Jesus’ contrasting the hired hands who run away (cfr Jn 10:12), and the apostles who will run (cfr Jn 16:32). Nonetheless, they will be proven and tried, and purified.

Therefore, the task of the Good Shepherd was that of gathering into one flock the scattered children of Israel, and all who would follow after Him. This is not unlike the role of the Servant, who is called to be the Covenant of the People and the Light of the nations (cfr Is 42:6). He has been sent to gather those in “diaspora”, and to reunite the people of God: indeed He will be the light of the nations, as His redemption is to reach the “distant isles”, the “ends of the earth” (cfr Is 50:5, ff.).

The Good Shepherd image of John offers these aspects:

- the Pastoral Image: this is the image of the Shepherd guiding the flock, to the rich pasturage; the shepherd as nourishing, healing, providing;
- the “Soteriological” Image: the Shepherd who saves the flock by giving His own life; this is the Servant, Struck by God, pierced through – the Shepherd who is “struck” by God.<sup>4</sup>

#### 4. THE IMMOLATION OF THE ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON:<sup>5</sup>

The memory of the offering of Isaac was kept alive particularly in the festival of Passover. John puts it simply when He writes that God loved the world so very much that He offered up His only-begotten, and much loved Son for it (cfr Jn 3:16). The early Church was much taken up by this thought – as Paul had written to the Romans that God did not spare His only Son, but offered Him up.

It should be admitted that indeed there is relatively little reflection on the comparison between Christ and Isaac.<sup>6</sup> The passages from both Paul and John seem to be based on the OT mystery of the oblation of Isaac by Abraham, under divine command. The aged patriarch was directed by God to take his “only child”, “the one whom he loved”, and go to Moriah – the future site of Israel’s Temple. There Isaac was to be offered as a holocaust – but, at the last moment, the angel of the Lord intervened (cfr Gn 22:2-12).

There are striking parallels between Genesis and John:

- it was the only son offered in holocaust;
- it was the son in whom the promises of the Covenant depended;
- the Covenant, in some way, was to flow from the sacrifice of this Son.

<sup>4</sup> cf. Rudolf Schnackenburg, Vol 2, pp. 295, f.

<sup>5</sup> cf. F.M. Braun, Vol 3, 1, pp. 157, ff.

<sup>6</sup> cfr. R. LeDeaut, *La nuit pascale*. Rome: Institut Biblique Pontificale 1963, pp. 133-213. cfr. also James Swetnam, SJ, *Jesus and Isaac*. Rome: Biblical Institute Press, Analecta Biblica 94, 1981.



The NT tradition does mention the offering of the “only, most beloved” (cf. Heb 11:17, ff.). The sacrifice that was asked of Abraham was one of totality. In the NT, Jesus Himself is presented as making this offering: He comes Himself to obey the will of the Father (cf. Heb 10:5, ff.).

Hebrews and Romans are close to John in spirit – but it is the 4<sup>th</sup> gospel (cfr Jn 3:16) which closely captures the OT spirit: God indeed gave up His only begotten, much loved Son. The full acceptance on the part of Christ is also much emphasized by John (an aspect not emphasized in the OT texts, but very much a part of the Rabbinic Aqedah. This rabbinic tradition places Isaac as an adult, and lays down willingly on the altar – a particular that the OT does not include.

The willingness of Jesus may be seen in His overall choice to carry out the Father’s will (cf. Jn 10:17, ff.) – especially in the Good Shepherd theme. Repeatedly it is shown that Jesus was taken in charge, was bound, seized (cf. Jn 18:12-24; 19:17, ff.).

Whether or not John was influenced by the extra-biblical rabbinic tradition, can be left to the experts. The emphasis that the 4<sup>th</sup> gospel seems to make is the offering which Abraham made, and the offering which the Son of God made of Himself. Nonetheless John could very well be trying to show that the oblation of Jesus was far above the rabbinic tradition’s presentation of Isaac offering himself.

Isaac is not explicitly identified with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah – yet, perhaps through the title the “beloved” – this comes to light. Along with the title MONOGENES (only-begotten), Isaac is also described as the “beloved”: AGAPETOS (cfr Gn 22:2, 12, 16). In John (cfr 1:14; 1:18; 3:16; 1 Jn 4:9), there seems to be an overlapping of these two titles in reference to Jesus Christ.<sup>7</sup>

While the Suffering Servant may defy any explicit textual mention, yet the traits of the Servant do call to mind Isaac. The life of Isaac is offered, and God accepts the oblation. The Servant is eventually is immolated as a lamb (cfr Is 53:7; Gn 22:7). The death of the Servant is indeed “in atonement’ (cfr Is 53:10).

## 5. JESUS AS THE SERVANT (LAMB) OF GOD:

Very early in John’s gospel (cf. 1:29, 36), Jesus is referred to as the “Lamb of God”. The Paschal Lamb, the daily sacrificial lamb, symbol of innocence, serves as

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<sup>7</sup> cfr. C. Spicq, OP, *Agape dans le NT. Analyse des texts*. Paris: Gabalda 1959, Vol 2, pp. 70, ff.: “AGAPETOS dans les epîtres du NT.”

an apt figure for the innocent Suffering Servant of God. In the early church, Jesus was commonly designated in this way.

The parallels are evident, as would appear from any analysis of the four Canticles of the Servant. The Servant is introduced as the “chosen”, the “beloved” (cfr Is 42:1, ff.). He has been called to the Light of the World (cfr Is 49:1, ff.). He has been called for the “wearied”, and provided with a disciple’s tongue, each day hearing the word of God (cfr Is 50:4, ff.). In the 4<sup>th</sup> and most important Cantic (cfr Is 52:13-53:12), Jesus is “pierced through”, and by His wounds, our wounds are healed. He offers His life as (**ASHAM**) the holocaust of atonement.

Some authors discuss the possibility that when John the Baptist said “there is the Lamb of God”, he could have meant “Servant” or “Son” of God, in that the word used – **TALYA** – might have been translated that way.<sup>8</sup>

John the Baptist’s announcement, early in the 4<sup>th</sup> gospel, seems to have been that Jesus was being proclaimed. The imminent advent of the Judge of the Last Times was indicated – the apocalyptic figure of the Lamb was applied to the person of the Messiah, King and Judge.

Further, in the 4<sup>th</sup> gospel, the proclamation of the Lamb had the specific purpose of introducing a paschal setting. This would automatically bring to mind a list of themes to be applied to the Paschal Lamb. It has been said that the Festival of the Pasch is found nine times in John’s gospel (cfr 2:13, 23; 6:4; 11:55; 12:1; 13:1; 18:28, 39; 19:4). This Festival truly permeates the entire life and ministry of Jesus. “Paschal” elements are particularly evident, as has been seen, in the culminating mystery of the redemption:

- Jesus is put to death at the very hour (cfr Ex 12:6; Nb 9:2, ff.) when the paschal lambs, meant for the festive meal, were being immolated;
- the careful avoidance of the “crurifragium”, the breaking of the legs of Jesus (cfr Jn 19:32, ff.), and this was substituted for by the extremely symbolic piercing of the side of Jesus (cfr Ex 12:46; Nb 9:12);
- in John’s gospel, Jesus is clearly the New Temple; “He was speaking of the sanctuary of His body” (cfr Jn 2:19, ff.).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> This possibility is discussed by F.M. Braun, OP, *Jean le theologien. Les grandes traditions d’Israel l’accord des Ecritures d’apres le quatrieme evangile*. Paris: Gabalda 1964, Vol 2, pp. 69-86.

<sup>9</sup> cfr. R.J. McKelvey, *The New Temple*. London: Oxford University Press 1969; G. A. Barrois, *Jesus Christ and the Temple*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press 1980.

With all this, then, the mystery of Redemption might be seen in this light:

- a **New Exodus**: The Israelites of old had been saved by the blood of the Lamb. These sacrificial animals were seen to have a “propitiatory value”. There was a passage from the darkness into the light (cfr Jn 8:21); from slavery into service (cf. Jn 8:32, ff.); from sure death to eternal life (cfr Jn 5:24). Furthermore, in John, the Exodus symbols are most evident: the bronze serpent (cfr Jn 3:14); the manna (Jn 6); the source of living water from the rock (cfr Jn 7:38); the column of fiery cloud (cf. Jn 8:12) – and the Paschal Lamb of redemption.

- the **New Covenant**: the wisdom tradition explains that the first Passover night had been foretold: this would inspire trust in them, and allow them to have joyful courage (cfr Ws 18:6).

The death of Jesus as the Paschal Lamb, and the Grain of Wheat would unite the mystery of Redemption to the spring of the year, and the Festival of Passover. Jesus, with the pierced side, and the streams of living water flowing from His side would associate the mystery of redemption with the Festival of Tabernacles, and the harvest of the grape. The death and resurrection of Jesus have obtained the grace of “passing over” from the darkness of slavery and death into the freedom of service and life.

## 6. THE SELF OBLATION OF JESUS (Cfr Jn 17:19)

The Priestly Prayer of Jesus is not unlike the high priest’s prayer of Yom Kippur. It is a prayer intimately associated with the impending Passion and Death, from which it can never be separated. The specific “consecration” that Jesus is to undergo, is that of handing over His life. With the emphasis on the “for them”, there seems to be Good Shepherd connotations (cf. Jn 10:11, 15) and Eucharistic (cf. Jn 6:51). Some have read this passage rather blandly, namely, that in “laying down His life”, it merely meant that Jesus was dedicating Himself to a cause.

“Consecration”, though, has special connotations: the Father had “consecrated” Jesus and sent Him into this world (cf. Jn 10:36). The “consecration of Jesus would include – and surpass – the following:

- the sharing of His doctrine (cf. Jn 17:18);
- the manifestations of His name (cf. Jn 17:6, 26);
- His offer to protect the Apostles (cf. Jn 17:12).

Jesus' "consecration" of His life is the external surrender to death – a kind of exteriorization of the profound inner unity between the Father and the Son, expressed through loving obedience.

"Consecration" is eminently liturgical – Jesus has come for the expressed purpose of establishing universal cult – as He pointed out in His conversation with the woman of Samaria: the genuine worship is in spirit and truth. Jesus consecrates Himself "for others", for whom He gives His life (cf. Jn 6:51; 10:11, 15; 11:50, f.; 15:13).

The Document to the Hebrews will explain this point: it is no longer the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of heifers. Jesus has offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice. This oblation of His has purified the inner being of His people from all dead actions of slavery – for a free and total service to the living God (cf. Heb 9:11, ff.).

Therefore, John presents the mystery of Redemption in liturgical terms of sacrifice out of love.

## B. The Fall of the Year – The Water-Gate – the Sheep-Gate The Festival of Ingathering [SUKKOTH]; Tents; Tabernacles

### Presentation

[1] The text of Jn 19:37 seems to be for the evangelist a passage of extraordinary importance. Together with v. 36, this forms a medley of biblical citations which serve as **a conclusive reflection**, not only after the episode recounted in the preceding verses [19:31-34], but **draws to a conclusion the Passion narrative**. In fact, the combining of two biblical citations to conclude an account is a procedure that is used only two times in the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel: here and in 12:38-40. This latter is found in the final periscope of the entire public life of Jesus – preparing for the Gospel of Glory, Jn 13:1, ff. Exceptional situation of this nature **serves to indicate the theological meaning of the entire Passion of Jesus**.

[2] The first of the two texts cited: ... ***all this happened to fulfill the words of Scripture: 'Not one of his bones will be broken'***... [Jn 19:36 – Ex 12:46; Ps 34:26] - is probably a passage from Ex, where there is found described the ritual of the **Paschal Lamb**, at the celebration of the **Pasch** in Egypt: **They will not break any bone...!** [Ex 12: 10, 46; Nb 9:12].

[3] The other, of course, is from Zc 12:10: **They will look on the One they have pierced.** In the context of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel these two texts refer to the two events recounted a little before. Therefore, it is necessary to keep in mind how the entire periscope is constructed [Jn 19:31-37].

[4] It seems to unfold in three movements, clearly disposed in a chiastic manner [A,B.A']:

- in A [vv. 31-34 ] two events are recounted, one is negative [the soldiers do not break the legs of Jesus, because He was already dead] - the other event is positive [after the thrust of the lance on the part of one of the soldiers, blood and water gushed forth from Jesus' sacred side];
- In B [v. 35], the evangelist gives a three-fold testimony in the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel: Jn wishes therefore thus to emphasize the exceptional importance of these facts for the Christian faith;
- in A' [vv. 36-37], there are presented the two citations from Scripture which give us the theological interpretation of the two related facts.

[5] Since it is our duty solely do contemplate the interpretation of the second citation here, it is important to observe attentively that this v. 37 is a commentary on v. 34. This means that the citation from **Zacchariah** [***They will look on the One they have pierced...!***] is referred by the evangelist to his preceding text: ***They pierced Him on the side and immediately blood and water came out...*** The contemplative gaze of the faithful believers, therefore, is concretely orientated toward the **Pierced Jesus, from Whom blood and water issue.**

[6] However, in order to reflect more deeply on **the theological and spiritual reality revealed in Jn 19:37**, first, we must examine briefly **Zc**, who is cited here - and then the terms within the writings of Jn that prepare for our verse. Then, as we proceed, there will be a careful analysis of the verse itself. This will be followed in the third part by an example of the resonance that the central verse discussed here has had in the ecclesial tradition.



## [I] Themes implied in Jn 19:37

## 1. The Text from Zc 12:10:

a. This passage cited by Jn pertains to a Prophetic Oracle that announces salvation and the eschatological restoration of Jerusalem [cf. Z 12-14]. In the passage Zc 12:10-13:1, there is recounted the death of a **mysterious King and Shepherd, who probably represents the future Messiah**. God Himself is revealed as personally 'wounded' by this premature death. But, He takes the initiative for the conversion of the inhabitants of Jerusalem promising them a good spirit and a bubbling fountain of fresh, pure water for their sins. The verses 12:10 & 13:1 at the beginning and at the end of the passage are parallels:

12:10	13:1
On that day	On that day
I will pour out over the House	there will be for the House
Of David, and on the	of David and for the
Inhabitants of Jerusalem	inhabitants of Jerusalem
A spirit of grace	a source [always]
And of prayer	opened
They will turn their gaze	for sin and for
On Me Whom they have pierced.	for impurity.

b. At the verse of Zc 13:1 on the open Fountain for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, one can add the text of the **Living Water** of the following chapter:

*On that day, Living Waters will flow out from Jerusalem: half toward the eastern sea and have toward the western ocean; it will be thus in the summer as in the winter. The Lord will be King over all the earth. On that day the Lord unique and unique will be His Name ... [Zc 14:8-9].*

c. The application of these three texts to Jesus Christ on the Cross is obvious. In **Jn 7:38**, Jesus had announced that the streams of living water would have come forth from His breast. The evangelist explains that **He said this of the Spirit**. [v. 39]. Therefore, there is comprehended the connection of the texts of Zc with the scene of Jesus on the Cross: the **open fountain** for the Inhabitants of Jerusalem is **the open side of Jesus** – the **Living Waters that flow from Jerusalem**, according to Zc – are for Jn the **living waters that flow from deep within Jesus** [Jn 7:38], **Who is the New Temple** predicted by Ezk 47.

d. These waters flow east and west and bring **purification and life**. Clearly we have here the theme of universalism of salvation. Now, according to the inscription on the Cross willed by Pilate, **Jesus raised on the Throne of the Cross** is presented the **King of the Jews** [19:19-22] – however, this **title** was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. This means that **His messianic regality was proclaimed to the entire world**.

e. There was thus verified also the final prophecy of Zc where it is no longer a matter of the **Pierced Shepherd**, but of the **Lord Himself** and of His universal regality in the **eschatological times: *He will be King over all the earth!*** [Zc 14: 9].

f. The application to Jesus of these two prophecies of Zc [12:10-13:1 & 14:8-9] have permitted giving to the scene of the **piercing** and to the **water** flowing from **the opened sacred side** an historical- salvific meaning that is quite broad.

2. **The great Johannine themes present in v. 37:** There are three principal themes of Jn's theology that will re-flourish here:

- the raising up of the Son of Man;
- the gathering of the dispersed Sons of God;
- and the pairing of revelation-faith.

a. **The Exaltation of the Son of Man**

1.] The passages from Jn which speak of the exaltation of Jesus Christ are well known [3:14; 8:28; 12:32]. These correspond to three announcements of the Passion in the Synoptics. **To be raised up** in the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel does not mean merely raised up into glory, as in the Ascension - but rather the emphasis is on the tight bond in Jn between the **Cross and Resurrection**. This is an expression used to describe **the Death of Jesus** [cf. Jn 12: 33]. This theme is precious in order to **interpret theologically the Calvary scene**, especially the final verse [19:37].

2.] The third passage is the most important: ... ***Now judgment is made on this world, now the prince of this world is cast out. And I, when I will be raised from the earth, I will draw all to my self...*** [Jn 12:31-32]. And here, three grand theological themes converge:

- **Jesus is raised up** on His Cross as on a royal Throne is the Conqueror of this Prince of this World – Altar – Podium, Pulpit;

- Jesus draws all to Himself;
- Jesus realizes thus the gathering of the Messianic People to Himself.

3.] Regarding this third theme here, that of gathering the dispersed we will come back to this. As for the first theme, victory of Christ, this is an aspect of His **regality**, strongly emphasized by Jn throughout the entire Passion account. But how are we to understand the second theme here: how does Jesus draw all to Himself?

a.] From the parallel passage [Jn 6:44:4, on the necessity of the **attraction of the Father** in order to be able to come to Jesus, it is seen that to be drawn means: to listen to the Father and to allow oneself to be instructed by Him, to be taught by God, this is the fundamental attitude of the New Covenant:

*... All your sons shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the peace of your children... [Is 54:13].*

*... \* The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 32 It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers the day I took them by the hand to lead them forth from the land of Egypt; for they broke my covenant and I had to show myself their master, says the LORD. 33 But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD. I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 No longer will they have need to teach their friends and kinsmen how to know the LORD. All, from least to greatest, shall know me, says the LORD, for I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more... [Jr 31:31-34].*

b.] So, too, the expression to be drawn by Jesus on the Cross indicates the perfect availability and openness of the faithful believer towards all that which Jesus reveals on the Cross. This describes the movement of faith toward the truth of the Cross. Jesus draws to Himself, by revealing Himself - there is need for the Faithful believer to let himself be drawn receiving the truth of the Lord as his/ her Way, Truth and Life.

c.] From these three texts on the raising up of Christ on the Cross there can be deduced precious indications for the interpretation of Jn 19:37: Jesus, raised up on the Cross, to Whom the faithful are called to raise their minds and hearts, seems to be like a King reigning from His royal throne, in a stance of Victory. With the revelation of the Cross He draws all to Himself, by thus exercising over all the Faithful His regality. The **contemplative gaze** that believers will direct toward Him



will be a contemplation of Faith. There is furthermore, at least it seems so, **a hint toward the theme of the gathering of the People around Jesus raised on high**. We will now ponder this aspect as well.

**b. The Gathering of the Dispersed Children of God:**

**1.]** This is a very important biblical and Judaic theme and has been much studied also in recent years. It is indispensable to examine it a bit more closely because in Jn the **Messianic Assembly** is one of the principal effects of Christ's death. The Sanhedrin had condemned Jesus to death, fearing that the Romans would come in order 'to destroy the place and the nation' [11: 28]. However, Caiphas prophetically [unwittingly!] said to them: ***It is better that one man should die for the people*** [11:50] This declaration came to be interpreted thus by the Evangelist: ***Since he was High Priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus ought to die for the nation, and not for the nation only but for the dispersed children of God, in order to gather them into one...*** [11: 51-52]. There is sharp contrast here between dispersed...unity.

**2.]** For Jn this assembly of **the Dispersed Children of God** is realized in the death of Jesus, precisely at the foot of the Cross. The New People of God is re-presented here by the Mother of Jesus, by the Beloved Disciple: **Mary is the Messianic Daughter of Sion**, the Mother who receives her Children [cf. Jn 19: 26, f.] – the Nascent Church. **The Beloved Disciple is the personification of all the Children of God, or all the Disciples of Christ**. Different from Lk in Ac, Jn sees therefore being realized **the Birth of the Messianic People of God**, i.e., of the Church not so much at Pentecost, but **standing at the foot of the Cross of Jesus Christ, on Calvary**.

**3.]** This theme of the **Messianic Assembly of the People of God** leads us to comprehend better the final verse of the Passion account under study here. The fact that many **will turn their eyes toward Him Whom they have pierced**, i.e., toward Christ Who has been raised up, will also create among all these an authentic unity, not however due to any kind of a horizontal understanding on a sociological level. Rather, all will find the very principle of their unity outside of their group, in Him. **They will be all assembled into one, they will be orientated toward that One Man raised up on the Cross with His side pierced, opened**. Precisely with their contemplative gaze fixed upon Him they will be all gathered into one. In this contemplative concentration, the Dispersed Children of God will become the One Messianic People.

c. **The Relationship between Revelation and Faith:**

1.] This coupling can be considered as **the structure supporting the entire Johannine theology and message**. Without forcing the meaning of the texts it can be stated it surely seems, that **this dialectic between Revelation and Faith, may be found also in this present passage that we are contemplating**. More precisely, this seems to stand out between **vv. 37 & 34**, of which it has been pointed out that in the structure of the passage, these correspond with each other. The second verse [concerning **that contemplative gaze toward the pierced and open side**], this is presented as **the response of believers** toward the One they have pierced and **this is a contemplation of Faith**.

2.] This results from the various observations noted above: **Jesus, from Whose side issue forth both Blood and Water, is a Sign a Symbol, with a sublime revealing sense**. To this point which has been already amply treated, we will return further on. Therefore, there is quite evident the importance of this pairing: **Revelation/ Faith**, for the interpretation of the Calvary scene: to that **revelation of the interiority of Jesus**, which is presented to believers, with the two-fold symbol of Blood and Water, **the Disciples becoming the Faithful**, will **respond with their contemplative gaze of faith towards the opened and pierced side of Jesus Christ, raised up on the Cross**.

**Summary**

[1] If these observations indeed prove valid, it becomes clear that the theological themes implicitly connected with the final verse of the Johannine account of the Passion are multiple and complex. We will seek here to summarize them, in synthetic form.

[2] With the application of the text of **Zc 12:10** to the piercing of Jesus' side, Jn has chosen to indicate that the Water gushing from this open pierced side symbolizes the **Living Water of the Holy Spirit**, Who brings **purification and life to the Faithful**. But, in the prophetic text the contemplative gaze toward the Pierced One seems to have been rather **a repentant sentiment of believers because of their sins and offenses**. This aspect does not appear any further in the Johannine description – where it is presented much more as a **Contemplative Gaze of Faith**.

[3] From the parallel texts within the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel, it is seen that **Jesus on the Cross, with His opened and pierced side**, is presented not only as the King of the Jews, but also **as the King of all Believers**. Furthermore according to **Jn 3:14**, **Jesus**

raised up brings salvation, And therefore He is **revealed** to us as the **fulfillment** of the type of the **Bronze Serpent** in the desert, which was a sign of salvation for Israel threatened with death.

[4] With the revelation of meaning of the Cross, Jesus raised up draws all to Himself – He assembles them around Himself and thus **becomes the center of the unity of the Messianic People**, i.e., the gathering of all those who becomes the faithful Children of God.



## [II] Context of Jn 19:37

At this point in our study, there remains the challenge of performing a two-fold task: the student must first of all must ponder more deeply the ties within our passage [vv. 31-37] with the two preceding periscopes of the section of Calvary [vv/ 25-27 & 28-30]. It would then be required to seek out the more the studying of the more important terms in the passage.

### 1. To where is the contemplative gaze directed?

a. Let us recall that our verse which cites Zc, speaking of the Contemplative Reflection of the Pierced One, goes to v. 34 which describes precisely the piercing of Jesus. There is indicated in this verse the **Object of the Contemplation of Faith** near the end. For the interpretation of v.37 it is absolutely necessary to comprehend the sense of that two-fold symbol of both **Blood and Water** which flow forth **from the rib of Jesus**. It is good to call to mind here the symbolism unearthed by a careful meditation on the passage, its context and interpretations.

b. This passage, Jn 19: 31-37, throughout the entire gospel tradition is found only in Jn and it relates two apparently insignificant events that unfolded after the death of Jesus. In this sense one can say that the Hour of the Cross for Jn is the culminating moment of Jesus' earthly sojourn. But, here as always, in the Johannine Theology, the specific aspect is that of the revelation of the mystery of the Person and Actions of Jesus. The symbols of the Blood and Water form the open side reveal that which Jesus lived and willed interiorly, even before His dying. To understand this unified symbolic value of the Blood and Water together we are assisted by the literary structure of the section: v. 34 on the Blood and Water from His pierced side refer the attentive reader to v. 30 where there is cited the very last words of Jesus Himself: it is fulfilled! After this, there is described His death: ...

**bowing His head, He gave up His Spirit!** However, **vv. 34 & 30** also refer back a little further to **v. 28** where the evangelist had explained in anticipation that last expression: ... **after this, Jesus knew that everything had been completed** ... This was all for the **perfect fulfillment of Scripture** – this explanation then is accompanied by these dramatic words: ***I am thirsty!***

c. There are thus emphasized that in each of the three verses each time, **two** terms, with diverse connections among them:

- ***all is completed – I am thirsty*** - in **v. 28**;
- ***it is fulfilled – and He gave up His Spirit*** – in **v. 30**;
- ***Blood and Water*** – in **v. 34**.

In these three pairings of terms, the first always describes **the work of Christ**, while the second term the **Mission of the Holy Spirit**. There thus appear two parallel thematic lines that connect these three verses among themselves.

d. The first line presents in three successive terms the **Christological** theme, almost **a compendium of Christ's salvific work**: ***all is completed*** [v. 28] - ***all is completely fulfilled*** [v. 30] - Blood [v. 34]. The other line develops the **Pneumatological** theme and is orientated toward the **future**: ***I am thirsty*** [v. 28] - ***He gave up His Spirit*** [v. 30]; ***water*** [v. 34]. This other line is orientated to the life of the Church, while the first line provides in synthesis the salvific sense of **Jesus' past life**.

e. The **water of the Pierced Side** as is seen, is **a symbol of the Holy Spirit** – the literary structure is therefore in confirmation of that which results from other observations. But it needs to be noted that that Spirit, which should from now on animate the Church has been given by Jesus Himself [**He gave up His Spirit** – v.30] and that He already time experienced an ardent desire to give Him over to believers [***I am thirsty!*** - v. 28].

f. The symbol of the **Blood**, on the other hand, is integrally and exclusively **Christological**. The meaning of this symbol is to contemplate the final word of Jesus prior to His death: **it is fulfilled!** [v. 30] . From the commentary that the Evangelist makes of this already in v. 28 [***After this, Jesus knew that ever thing had now been completed and so that the scripture should be completely fulfilled ...***] - there is comprehended all the theological richness of that expression.

g. Two fundamental aspects become clear: on the one hand, Jesus' expression as He was dying: **It is fulfilled!** - expresses **His total obedience to the**

**Father's Will** , because the Divine Son has brought to completion the entire messianic plan which was indicated in Scripture. Then, on the other hand the parallelism of **13:1** [... *having loved those who were His in this world, He loved them to the end* ...] shows that the fulfillment of the Cross implies that in that moment there has been realized **the supreme manifestation of Christ's salvific love for His 'own.'**

h. In two words, it can be said that for Jn **the Blood from the Pierced Side of Jesus is the symbol of His Oblative Obedience to His Father and of His salvific love for all of us.** It can also be further emphasized with some authors, [E. Haenchen], the mournful character of a triumphant cry, of this: **it is fulfilled!** This is the **very last word of Jesus prior to His glorification.** The reference to **13:1** shows that in **19:30** there has been achieved **the victorious completion of His entire journey of revelation of love.** His cry: **It is fulfilled!** - invites us **not only to experience compassion for Jesus, as even more to celebrate the Conqueror** who has brought to **fulfillment the Father's work: the efficacious manifestation of the divine love.**

2. **They will look on the One they have pierced...** - we have finally arrived at the **very heart of our contemplation.** All that has been presented up until now has served solely to facilitate the interpretation of this verse, so significant in the entire Johannine account of the Passion.

a. Let us take note first of all that Jn's text which is an OT citation [**Zc 12:10**] is not totally identical to that of the Prophet. According to **Zc**, the gaze needs to be turned towards God: **they will turn their look on the One Who pierced Him!** But in the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel the text is applied directly toward Jesus Christ raised up on the Cross: **they will look on the One they have pierced!** There is a close tie between this verse and v. 34. This indicates the entire attention is concentrated here on **the Pierced Side of Jesus**, from Whom flows Blood and Water.

b. Who are these "**They**" - who will look so attentively upon the Pierced One? There is a broad spectrum of opinions among the exegetes: some think on the **soldiers** and on the **crowd** - others think about the **Jews** - and still others, think on the **believers in general.** However only this 3<sup>rd</sup> opinion imposes itself, in my view, by reason of the very close tie there is here in the context with v. 35 on the **Witness.** In the two cases, in fact, there may be found the same Greek verb – which, though, in English has to be translated with different verbs: in the one case, **they will see** - and in the other, they will **look on.** Yet the parallelism between the two cases is evident to language scholars:

- *...this is the evidence of the one who saw it* [the perfect tense here of the Greek verb, *horan* ] – *true evidence, and he knows what he says is true - and he gives it so that you may believe as well ...* [v. 35]
- *... they will look on* [ *opsontai*, the future tense of *horan* ] *the one they have pierced ...* [v. 37].

c. The next area of the reflection here should be on the nature of the **look, gaze, contemplation**, implied here. There is no further treatment here, as in the text of Zc, of a **look of repentance**. It is necessary to recall here all the nuances and all the theological richness of the theme **to seer** in Jn He uses for this purpose 4 different verbs with a progressive passage from **exterior seeing**, one that is **physical** - to **an interior contemplative gaze, pondering**: to fathom [*blepein*] - to **observe** [*theorein* = theorize] - to **contemplate** [*theasthai*] – and to **see** [*horan*] – with varied aspects according to the tense of the verb. In **19:35** it is used to describe the **Disciple-Witness**, the verb being a perfect participle, meaning that it expressed **an acquired experience, already possessed**: *...This is the evidence of One who say it and he knows what he says is true!* [v. 35]. This means that the Witness still retains all that he saw. In the final verse, though, **v. 37**, the future tense is used: *... They will look to the One they have pierced!* This is **an implicit invitation for all** to turn their **contemplative reflection toward the pierced side of Jesus** in order to **become participants of this experience as well as of the vibrant faith of the Disciple-faithful Witness**. First there is required of the Faithful Witness to **see**: for them, as for the original witness, this **look, gaze** needs to become a **contemplation of faith, and internalized experience**, a permanent possession: *... so that you may believe as well!*

d. Let us recall here now that which was pointed out on concerning the object that gaze of which **v. 37** speaks: Exteriorly it is obvious, that object of that **gaze** can be only that which is then described in **v. 34**: the Pierced Side of Jesus from which flowed forth Blood and Water. However, the **symbolic value** of this fact and **the literary co-relations of the passage** with other texts open here broad perspectives in diverse directions. Let us hold present all that has been said in the first section of this study, on the **biblical background** and the **Johannine background** of the theme – and the also, in the first part of the second section on the ties of **v. 34** with **vv. 28 & 30**, in the literary structure of the episode of Calvary. There is offered here a brief summary of these principal themes:

- the **Water** from the opened side is the symbol of the Gift of the Holy Spirit – this is the **Living Water of Salvation** flowing from Jesus' side. He becomes the **New Temple, the Eschatological Temple**.

- the **Blood** has appeared to many scholars as the **symbol** and the **revelation** of Jesus' adherence to the Will of God, of His Filial Obedience to the Father and of His salvific love for us.

- the **Water** that flows from His opened side symbolizes His Spirit WHom He communicates to us and with Whom it becomes possible also for us to participate in these profound dispositions of Jesus Christ.

e. In this Johannine account, there is not used the word **Heart**. But, the interiority of Jesus Christ of which we have spoken is precisely that which later will be called by noteworthy representatives of the mystical tradition of the Middle Ages and from then on, the Heart of Jesus Christ. This is not by chance, evidently, that the most important biblical text for the theology and the spirituality of the Heart of Jesus is always this Johannine verse on the Pierced Side of Christ. The analyses of the modern exegesis of this passage of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel can be a valid help in order to fathom the more deeply also biblically, that theology and spirituality of the Heart of Christ.

f. But let us return now to the verse under discussion here, Jn 19:37, before passing to the third section of the present study. Let us insist once more on the strict parallelism of v.34 with v. 37. In the first of these two texts there is treated the Mystery of Jesus with His Pierced Side. This is revealed by means of the symbols of the Blood and Water. In the second text there is presented the Believer who turns his contemplative gaze to the pierced Christ. The scope of **this contemplative gaze is not simply to see, or look at** the scene. Much more deeply, there is an urgency to penetrate in faith its meaning: to ponder the interiority of the Pierced One.

g. The penetrating contemplative gaze of the Faithful Believer, therefore, seeks to discover in this scene something of **the Mystery of Christ's interiority**, through the symbols of Blood and Water – but, also to participate, in the Holy Spirit, in that profound interior life of Jesus Christ – and his basic attitude of Loving Filial Obedience, His Priestly Immolation of Self-giving. **This profound interior life of Jesus Christ, by means of the Holy Spirit thus becomes the Church's life**. It can indeed be said with St. Ambrose: The Church has been introduced into the 'secret room' of Jesus Christ – and now the secret room of the Church is the Body of Jesus Christ – the King has introduced His Spouse into all His mysteries of His Person and Mission.

### C. The Prolongation of this Theme in Tradition

1. **Apoc 1:6-8**: the first point to observe, already very impressive, is that Zc's passage, cited already by Jn at the conclusion of his account of the Passion of the Lord, re-appears here in another context, much more solemn, in the Prologue of the Apocalypse [1:7-8]:

... He loves us and has washed away our sins with his blood, and made us a **Kingdom of Priests to serve** his God and father; to him, then, be glory and power forever and ever. Amen! Look he is coming on the clouds [Dn 7:13]; everyone will see him, even those who pierced him [Zc 12:10, 14], and all the races of the earth will mourn over him. Indeed, this shall be so. Amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is, who was, and who is to come the Almighty...

a. The Author of the Apocalypse reunited here, in order to join them to Jesus Christ, **two celebrated prophecies of the OT: Daniel's [7:13] Messianic Vision on the Son of Man who will come on the clouds of heaven** – and, Zc's [12:9-13] announcement of the Eschatological Restoration of Jerusalem. However, it is necessary to remember that as for this passage from Zc, the author of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel had only noted a few words of it, that of the contemplative gaze toward the Pierced One [Jn 19:37], and gave it a kind of new interpretation as was pondered above.

b. Whereas in the Rv on the other hand, in addition to Zc 12:10, there is also cited the verse following in the Prophecy [Zc 12:14] on the senses of **repentance** of all the tribes and their weeping. As for the text of Zc, Rv assumes, therefore, the **penitential meaning** and it is certainly in this way that the Prophet himself understood this gesture. However, regarding **penitential sense** there is absolutely no longer any trace of this aspect in the shorter citation of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel.

c. This particular must be kept in mind if we seek to evaluate exactly the manner in which the verse Jn 19:37 is interpreted in the tradition. Too often, in fact, **between the text of the Gospel of Jn**, on the one hand [a **contemplative gaze**] – and the texts of Zc and Rv on the other [a **reflection of repentance**]. It has not been seen sufficiently that in Jn 19:37 the text of Zc had been read and re-interpreted by the Evangelist in a new perspective, **that of the faith**. There is thus explained that in the long tradition, there is found a **two-fold reading** of the Johannine verse: one of these, that is quite wide-spread, manifests an **eschatological orientation of Hope** – while the other is of an **ecclesial nature, a Faith-filled Contemplation**. Only this second interpretation seems to have garnered precisely the authentic meaning of Jn.



## 2. Jn 19:37 read in an Eschatological Perspective:

a. This first type of reading is without doubt, the more common in the History of exegesis. In this regard, St. Justine is often cited, who often uses Rv 1:7 [and indirectly Zc 12:10] in order to describe **the Second Coming of Jesus**. Particularly interesting for us is a passage of his from his *Dialogue with Trypho* [32, 2], where the Martyr distinguishes **two Comings of Christ**: the first one, His **Advent, in Humility** in which He was pierced in His execution; **the Second Coming, in Glory**, when **all will recognize the one they have pierced**.

b. There should be noted, however, that for the episode of Calvary [at the end of His First Coming], St. Justine cites only the words on the **piercing of Jesus** and does not cite those on the **gaze on the part of the Jews**. In the second coming, their gaze, as that of all of us, will be **a reflection of repentance**, St. Justine notes. As is seen, the text of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel is read in the perspective of that of Rv. This one example should suffice for the first type of reading.

## 3. The Historico-Salvific and Ecclesial Reading of Jn 19:37

a. Let us recall that which was explained above: by reason of the parallelism of v. 37 with v. 35 [which implies the doubling of the subjects for the two verbs: **they will look upon** and **whom they have pierced** in v. 37]. It seems, then, that it should be said that the **contemplative gaze** toward the Pierced One, as described in the final verse [v. 37], prolongs that **'pondered look'** of the same disciple [v. 35] and becomes then **an invitation to share Faith in Him in the salvific sense of the Calvary Event**. It is from Him that flows the blood and the water from the opened side of Jesus Christ. This was the symbol of which the Faithful Witness offers his testimony.

b. There is thus delineated for the Church a kind of 'typologization' and of 'symbolization' of the **Witness-Disciple**, precisely in that which he had experienced at the foot of the Cross: **he becomes the re-presentation, the model of every Faithful Believer**.

c. Everything had begun with the fact that he had **'seen', contemplated in faith**, the Blood and the Water from the opened side and has **believed** even more deeply. However, this **experience** of his, and its resultant **deeper faith**, is the source from which **he continues to render Testimony, Witness** in the community [cf. the perfect tense of 'witnessed'], **so that also all of us might believe!** These events need to become **the experience and the faith of all in the Church**. This is the sense behind the use of the **future tense**, **they will turn their contemplative gaze on the**

**One they have Pierced.** This **Disciple whom Jesus loved** [cf. Jn 19:6] thus becomes **the Model of all Discipleship in Christ.**

d. It is in this manner that our verse has been comprehended correctly by many interpreters throughout the tradition of the Church especially in more recent times. However, the careful reader will find this type of reading in the better Medieval commentary of Rupert von Deutz [+ 1130]. After having observed that Jn 19:37 refers back to the fact noted in Jn 19:34, he thus proceeds, as though to invite us to grasp concretely the announcement contained in the words of Jn: **They will turn their gaze ... of v. 37: Now, in the end, we ought to contemplate at much length such a great event.** We cannot pass over the hidden, 'sacramental' sense of this great event of which the holy Evangelist with such care has given us his testimony. And he then explains the theological and symbolic sense of the two facts noted earlier.

e. Along these same lines, different contemporary authors also develop their thought in **commentaries that are more directly spiritual of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel**. We will cite here J. Laplace: 'All believers are invited to contemplate this great mystery, of which 'the one who saw it, renders his testimony, a witness in harmony with the truth'. This means that his is a witness not only on the fact of which he is he witness, but also of its **deeper meaning**. All are called to look on the Pierced One, in order to believe in the reality of the mystery which has taken place on the Cross: **this is the Mystery of the Paschal Lamb**. The believer is called to **turn his contemplative gaze of faith on His opened side and to discover there the One Whom they have all pierced.** Jesus is **the authentic temple, from whose side flow the waters of salvation which give life to the nations.**

f. As our ultimate witness here let us recall one of JP II's Homilies. He observes even if he is not actually quoting Jn 19:31-34, he speaks of the **Heart**. And his text orientates us toward **Jesus' interiority**: 'The heart is not only an organ ... it is likewise a **symbol**. It speaks of the totally interior man. It includes the **spiritual interior** of a man. And the tradition immediately has re-lead this sense of the Johannine description. Furthermore, in a certain sense, the Evangelist himself has given the thrust, when in referring to the statement of the eye-witness which he was himself. He refers at the same time, to this phrase of Sacred Scripture : **They will look on the One they have pierced [cf. Jn19:37; Zc 12:10]**. Thus in reality he is considering the Church; thus he has humanity in mind. **And behold, in the Pierced One, from the lance of the Roman soldier all the generations of Christians have learned and still are learning how to read the mystery of the heart of the Crucified Man Who was indeed the Son of God.**

## CONCLUSION

[1] It is not without reason that the Christian Tradition has always seen in the Johannine passage on the **Pierced Side** the most important text for supplying a biblical foundation for the theology and the spirituality of the **Heart of Jesus**. The study that precedes here shows that this manner of seeing it was, and remains fully justified. Furthermore, the analyses offered permit the student to broaden and to fathom more deeply this interpretation.

[2] The newest element in the reflections here on Jn 19:34-37, stands perhaps in this: it results now clearly that Jn's text not only asks us to contemplate the Pierced Side of Jesus from which flowed blood and water, but it invites us also – let us take up again here the Pope's expression - **to penetrate into the spiritual depths of Jesus**. St. Ambrose put it this way: this is to enter into the **secret room** of Jesus **passing through the Pierced Side of the Lord**. Thus, the **contemplative pondering discovers His Filial Oblation to the Father and His salvific love** for us. These are deeply hidden in the **mysterious interior** of His heart, symbolized in His Blood.

[3] Through the symbol of the Water which flows out from this New Temple, the Christian comprehends that the Spirit of Jesus Christ is given to Him, and **that each Believer is called to live of this Spirit of Jesus in order to become Faithful**. Thus, all those who will turn their gaze toward the Pierced One will be able from that instant on, to **participate in that profound life of the Paschal Lamb which He gave for the salvation of the world**.



### D. MARY RETAINED ALL THESE THINGS IN HER HEART

[Lk 2:19, 51]<sup>10</sup>

29\* *Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls...* [Mt 11:29].

19\* *But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart...51\* And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart...* [Lk 2:19, 51]

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<sup>10</sup> Ignace de la Potterie, SJ, *Il mistero del cuore trafitto. Fondamenti biblici della spiritualità del cuore di Gesù*. Bologna: EDB 1988, pp. 158-168.

## Introduction

These texts supply the biblical background for the **Devotion to the Heart of Mary**. In Lk 2:19 offers the main support as her **heart** is mentioned clearly – yet, for many interpreters, the theme is noted also in other Gospel passages. Yet, it remains obvious that because of the emphasis here on **Mary's Heart**, both of Lk's texts prove to be the most important in the tradition of the Church. It is interesting to note that in the Synoptics, the word **Heart** is used solely for Jesus and Mary.

### 1. The Context of Lk 2:19, 51:

a. The first of these two passages comes a little after the account of the appearance of the Angels to the Shepherds, in Bethlehem [2:17-24] as the Conclusion to the Nativity Narrative:

*17 And when they saw it they made known the saying which had been told them concerning this child; 18 and all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. 19\* But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them...*

b. The second text [Lk 2:51], similar to this first one belongs to the Conclusion of the Infancy narratives. The emphasis here is on Lk 2:19. Many studies have been consecrated to these two passages. The principal area of disagreement among them is on the literary background of these formulae: some [Neirynck] would place this among the Hebrew Apocalyptic writings – others [A. Serra] would see it is from the Wisdom Tradition. Whichever is chosen, both the Apocalyptic and the Sapiential traditions have many over-lapping features. The emphasis here will be to discover the precise antecedents of these characteristic formulations employed by St. Luke.

### 2. OT Background [ Gn 37:7, ff.; Dn 4: 13, ff.; 7:1, ff.]

a. Gn 37:7-11: Joseph's Dream that his Father cherished:

*5 Now Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers they only hated him the more. 6 He said to them, "Hear this dream which I have dreamed: 7 behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf arose and stood upright; and behold, your sheaves gathered round it, and bowed down to my sheaf." 8 His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Or are you indeed to have dominion over us?" So they hated him yet more for his dreams and for his words. 9 Then he dreamed*

*another dream, and told it to his brothers, and said, "Behold, I have dreamed another dream; and behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me." 10 But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him, and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves to the ground before you?" 11\* **And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.***

The Father's reaction is what is important in our context: to **retain the saying** means above all to impede it from falling into forgetfulness. It means to **keep it alive in memory**, in order eventually to **see it one day realized**. Now the realization of the dream will in fact be recounted further on. In the course of the **Joseph Narrative**, whose account begins forthwith: ...6 **Now Joseph was governor over the land; he it was who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came, and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground...** [Gn 42:6]. And this is in much contrast to earlier times in their lives.

The formula above regarding his father: ... **but his father kept the saying in mind...** [Gn 37:11] - does not only describe the memory-recollection of Jacob. It showed rather that Patriarch having been placed before an enigma that could come from God – the old man retained it in his heart in order to see whether or not it was about to come true at a later time. The expression is therefore orientated toward the future - it allowed on to foresee the realization of the dream and this was prepared for in the dream.

**b. Dn 4:13-24: The King's Dream interpreted:**

*... 13 "I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and behold, a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven. 14 He cried aloud and said thus, 'Hew down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit; let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches. 15 But leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, amid the tender grass of the field. Let him be wet with the dew of heaven; let his lot be with the beasts in the grass of the earth; 16 let his mind be changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given to him; and **let seven times pass over him**. 17 The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will, and sets over it the lowliest of men.'*

*18 **This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw**. And you, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation, because all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation, but you are able, for the spirit of the holy gods \* is in you." 19 Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was dismayed for a moment, and his thoughts alarmed him. The king said, "Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation alarm you." Belteshazzar answered, "My lord, may the dream be for*

those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies! 20 The tree you saw, which grew and became strong, so that its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth; 21 whose leaves were fair and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all; under which beasts of the field found shade, and in whose branches the birds of the air dwelt-- 22 it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong. Your greatness has grown and reaches to heaven, and your dominion to the ends of the earth. 23 And whereas the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Hew down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field; and let him be wet with the dew of heaven; and let his lot be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him';

24 ...this is the interpretation, O king: It is a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, 25 that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field; you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men, and gives it to whom he will. 26 And as it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be sure for you from the time that you know that Heaven rules.

27 Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you; break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your tranquillity... [Dn 4:13-24].

The case of Joseph's Father [Gn 37:11] is similar to what is remembered here. There are actually two separate dreams [King Nabuchodonosor and that of Daniel 7]. Dn 4 recounts the dream of warning for the King regarding the future lowering of his realm to the level of the beasts [4:1-15]. Then follows the interpretation of the dream by Daniel [4:16-24] and finally its coming to pass and the folly of the King [4:25-30].

It is in the final verse of the transition to the third part of the chapter there is found our formula: ... 28 All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. In the LXX there is the phrase: 'At the end of these discourses, having understood the judgment that the vision announced, the King conserved these words in his heart. Also here, as is seen, the verse orientates one's view toward the future that the King feared – it announces and introduces that which occur immediately afterward: the account of the proximate fulfillment of the dream [cf. 4:39-38].

c. **Dn 7: 1-14: Daniel's Dream:**

*... In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, and told the sum of the matter. 2 Daniel said, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. 3\* \* And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. 4\* The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand upon two feet like a man; and the mind of a man was given to it. 5 And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side; it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.' 6 After this I looked, and lo, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back; and the beast had four heads; and dominion was given to it.*

*7\* After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong; and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. 8\* I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots; and behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things. 9\* As I looked, thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire. 10\* A stream of fire issued and came forth from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened. 11 I looked then because of the sound of the great words which the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire.*

*12 As for **the rest of the beasts**, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. 13\* I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came **one like a son of man**, and he came to **the Ancient of Days** and was presented before him. 14\* And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.*

This is Dn's celebrated vision of **the Beasts**, **The Ancient of Days** and **the Son of Man**. Then there comes once again the interpretation of the vision [cf. 7:15-27]. And then comes the verse of the Chapter's conclusion which forms the transition to that which will follow: ... **28 "Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed; but I kept the matter in my mind...** Then, Dn 8-12 prolongs the matter up to the announcement up to the announcement of the coming of the times at the end.

In these three cases there is uncovered a similar schema: first, the enigmatic announcement [under the form of a **dream**] of a future and an important event which will soon be realized in the history of the People of God. Then, there follows the accounting of its realization. [However, in the **apocalyptic context** of Dn, there is intertwined between the two an interpretation of the dream. However, the realization remains the principal element. The formula that interests us [**but I kept the matter in my mind...**] prepares and introduces each time, the account of the fulfillment: this describes the passage from the dream to the reality, the transition from the discourse to the event.

### 3. The Bethlehem Text:

a. These clarifications are most useful, because they help us to comprehend better the utilization of the formula by **Mary in Lk 2:19**: there are found there impressive similarities, but also significant differences with the preceding examples. The common element is certainly the **mysterious announcement** of an important event: in her case, the birth of the Messiah. In Bethlehem, however, it is not a matter of a **dream**, but rather of a message of the Angel of the Lord to the Shepherds: ***Today there is born for you a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord, in the City of David...*** [Lk 2:11].

b. This announcement of the Angel of the Lord is a revelation: **Today** declares the opening of the Messianic Times with the Birth of the Messiah. The great joy that this message brings will be that for all the people [v/ 10]. Therefore, after having come to see the **sign** [v. 12] the matter that had taken place [v. 15], **a new born baby placed in the manger** [v. 16]. The Shepherds then went to see what had taken place and all that had been said regarding this Child. And all those who heard of it were amazed at what the shepherds said [vv/ 17-19]. And it is here in v. 19 that there is placed that verse regarding Mary: **And she treasured all these things ... in her heart**.

c. To comprehend better that which Mary kept in her heart, we need to seek to discern better that which the expression used here designates: **all these things**.

- There may be noted the insistence on the word **all**, which is placed in an emphatic position – nothing like this was found in the OT texts. This leaves us open to understand that there was here a plurality of ‘things’ that Mary retained in her memory.



- Among these, beyond any doubt, it would be necessary to include above all the **angelic announcement** itself which reveals its **Messianic [Christ] and Transcendent [the Lord!] character** of the newly born.

d. But contrary to what we had in the OT, the reader is already assisting at **a first realization of this announcement**: the Good News had already been given, first to the Shepherds [v.10]. However, these poor men **made what they had heard known** [v. 17] to all those who wanted to listen to it – that this Child is the **Savior, that He is Christ the Lord!**

- There might be noted here in the midst of **all these nuances** these are what form the basis of Mary's treasure: Mary not only had understood **the message**, as in the OT accounts, but she also sees the beginnings of their **realization**, in the very fact of **the proclamation of the genuine identity of the newly born**.
- Furthermore, among all these things that Mary retained in her heart, there should also be placed **the signs that accompanied the birth**. There is no trace of this factor in the OT parallel places.

e. To the Shepherds, there had been given a most clear sign: ***You will find a new born Child all wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger!*** [v. 12]. The sign formed a violent contrast with the **real identity of this Child**, revealed in the message. For Mary, **that contrast, that mystery served as an invitation to hope**, to expectancy, in order to see if and how all this would be realized following the message of the Lordship of the Infant, who was also so badly lodged.

f. The Angelic Hymn had already been for her an initial orientation in her expectancy for the future: **Glory to God in the highest heavens!** United then to the title **the Lord** given by the Angel of God, these words drew the attention of Mary toward **transcendence**. But the further orientation towards the future, by the stereotyped formula **Mary conserved all these things... in her heart** - will be in fact further clarified by the evangelist, ahead in the Gospel: the beginning of the Hymn of **a multitude of Heavenly Hosts**.

g. In Bethlehem, this will be taken up again later on, in Jerusalem, by the **entire multitude** of the disciples [19:37-38] - **[Glory to God in the highest heavens!]**. This is in **the Royal Enthronement of Jesus on Mount Olives**. This scene becomes a symbolic anticipation of the **Ascension, His Heavenly Enthronement at the Right Hand of the Father** [cf. Ac 2:33-35] - only then will Jesus become definitively and in the full sense of the term: **Lord, Messiah**. [Ac 2:32]. It is all the more notable that

these titles had already been utilized in the **Angelic Message in Bethlehem** [Lk 2:11]. This shows to what point this theophanic scene of the Birth of Jesus had already for Lk a value of an anticipated symbol of that which was to be realized in a definitive manner at the Ascension.

#### 4. He will be called the Son of God:

a. Without doubt, one can also include among **all these things** [cf. Lk 2:19], as the **treasures of Mary's Heart**, still another sign. This had been given beforehand to Mary herself at the moment of the Annunciation: the Angel Gabriel had not only announced to Mary the **virginal conception** of the Infant [cf. 1: 35 a] – but, he had also spoken of His birth. There had been drawn from all this a mysterious conclusion: **Therefore, He shall be called the Son of God!**

b. The Birth was presented as a sign. In **2:1-20**, two other times, the **Infant** is spoken of: **first**, when Lk recounts the fact that she **brought forth her first-born son** – 2:7]; **then**, in the message of the Angel to the Shepherds, **today there is born for you a Savior** - 2:11]. It is therefore normal that there should be **compared and pondered** among themselves, these three texts, seeking to clarify them, one with the other. **That which had been said at the Annunciation** with regard to that birth which was to take place in Bethlehem – that announcement surely must have been present to the memory of Mary at the moment in which **she brought forth her First-born**.

c. Unfortunately, v. 1:35 b, which explains the **manner** of that birth, is much discussed as is its exegesis. We have to limit ourselves to give here a translation and an interpretation to be sought elsewhere for greater detail. For different reasons, it seems, Lk 1:35 b might be translated thus: **Therefore** [as a consequence of the fact that the Power of the Most High would have exercised its action on Mary], **that which will be born holily will be called the Son of God**. this Holy Birth, announced by the Angel, is a birth without contamination, without stain – **in the Levitical sense** – that which the tradition will call the '**virginal birth**'.

d. This is presented here as a sign of transcendental identity of the Infant [therefore]. Let us note in this regard that the conception itself, which is not seen exteriorly, is not a sign. The **Birth**, on the contrary, the coming forth from the maternal womb, if it is accompanied by non-habitual particulars, could indeed be a sign. Such would be the case of the **virginal birth** – one without lesion, without loss of blood, that would 'contaminate' [Lv 12:7]. In Lk 1:35 b, this birth is clearly indicated as a sign: the extraordinary character of this birth will lead to the conclusion of the direct action of the Most High in the **conception itself** - from this

fact, there would be concluded also on the **divine filiation** of the Infant. This is a verifiable fact [**the virginal birth**] and it is presented as a **sign** of two invisible realities: the **conception** due to the Holy Spirit of God; and the **Divine Filiation** of the Infant.

e. But for whom was this **sign** meant? Since it consisted in the very manner of **giving birth**, it was first a **sign for the Mother herself, for Mary**. But, later on, it would serve as a **sign for believers**. It is therefore unthinkable, in the profound logic of this entire account, that at the moment of the birth of the Infant in Bethlehem. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, would not have remembered that which the Angel has announced to her on that most important moment of **the Birth: this ought to be pure and holy**. And thus it would have been a tangible sin that the Baby was **the Son of the Most High** [1:32] and **the Son of God** [1:35]. Now, precisely, the Angelic Message at Bethlehem would have taken place in an unforeseen manner to give proof of this.

**Summary:** Among **all the things** that Mary **conserved in her heart**, the analysis here has enabled us to discover both the **words** as well as the **facts** [15:17]. In the listing of these latter we might distinguish two **signs**: that which had been given not much before to the Shepherds [**an Infant in a stable**] and the sign given even before to Mary herself [**the virginal birth of the Child**]. However, both of these were bearers of a **revelation**: **the transcendent and divine identity of the Infant**. Furthermore, this identity was also the direct object of the message contained in the words of the Angel, both at **Nazareth [1:38]** as well as **at Bethlehem [2:17]**. It is the totality of these words, of these events, that constituted **all these things** that Mary retained in her heart.

## 5. The Verb: **conserved/ retained/ contemplated**:

a. This verb of **Lk 2: 19 [symbolousa]** – needs its own contemplation! As in English there are many nuances to this term. The challenge of the exegete is enormous, due to the many possible translations offered by the Dictionary. But, if one keeps in mind the very precise construction of Lk, there are some hints already for a solution.

b. The verb is a composite: **sym** - **ballo** - and its direct object, or complement, is **all these things**. It is **not a simple meditation**, but rather has the clear hint of **compare, confront** - i.e., in the passage at hand: **Mary truly and deeply sought to comprehend all these things, by comparing them among themselves**. According to the biblical analysis presented in this reflection of ours on the passage, **all these things** are the recent events with their value as **a biblical sign [the virginal**

birth; the appearance of the angels to the poor shepherds; the sign of the new-born Infant in a stable] – which the two-fold angelic message [at Nazareth and at Bethlehem]. It is in comparing prayerfully among themselves all these things that Mary sought to comprehend ever better the sense and the implications of all those mysterious events contained in these messages from on high.

c. However, other notable authors – like the Ven. Bede and A. Serra, OSM – understand this **confrontation, comparison** in another manner: Mary in this view, would have striven to grasp, to interpret these amazing facts by comparing them as well with the OT, as well as with these recent events – especially the resurrection. However, this interpretation may be a stretch, and does not seem sufficiently well founded, because it cannot support itself on any data in the biblical text; there is nothing that would lead anyone to think of the Resurrection. Furthermore, the construction of the phrase demands that the action of the verb: **confront, compare**, should bear on all these things – i.e., on the totality of the **recent events** that Luke presents regarding the Birth of Jesus, and the happenings in Nazareth and the more recent events of Bethlehem.

d. Nonetheless, the fact remains: that the expression **conserved, retained, kept in her own heart** orientates one towards the future. And the parallelism with that which has been noted by John the Baptist, in a similar passage, confirms this fully: *And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea; 66 and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him. 67 And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying, 68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people, 69 and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David..."* [Lk 1]. Some of these phrases echo then in Mary's reaction to the marvelous happenings regarding her own Son in 2:19. Immediately one could legitimately ask: would not the meaning of all this become explicit in this way: 'Is He, Jesus, perhaps not the expected, the long-awaited Savior, the Messiah, the Lord [cf. 2:11], the Son of God [1:35]?

e. The complete answer to all this can of course only be given later by Lk as his Gospel unfolds further. However, Mary herself, during the Infancy of Jesus, integrated ever more fully her personal and inner contemplation regarding the new facts and the new words as they presented themselves to her from on high, pertaining to her only-begotten Son, Jesus [cf. 2:51]. Lk returns to the formula of 2:19, in v. 51, as is well known by now. In this latter text, Lk applies all these things to the entirety of the gospel up until that moment, as an antiphon closing the Infancy phase of Jesus' life on earth, and opening up the mysterious hidden years. The

reflections, comparisons that Mary contemplated through the years continued to broaden, deepen intensify, develop and grow [cf. DV 8 b] in her life of faith.

### Conclusion

[1] It is no surprise that St. John Eudes would find in these texts [Lk 2:19, 51] the biblical foundation for the devotion to the Holy Heart of Mary – always in union with the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is exegetically true that these two passages only illustrate more clearly that had been said in the accounts of the **Annunciation** of Mary and her **Visitation**.

[2] At Nazareth, Mary had been declared the **Handmaid of the Lord** and she had expressed her joy-filled assent to the Word from on high [1:38]. A little later Elizabeth had proclaimed her **blessed** because she had **believed that which the Lord had said to her**.

[3] With Paul VI, it can be said that **Mary is the listening Virgin, the Virgin who listens, who receives the word of God in faith.**<sup>11</sup> Hers was an active faith, personal, one that was always listening to the new words of God, always attentive to new signs, in order **to better comprehend and to penetrate the mystery of the Infant** of Whom she was His Mother. Furthermore, her was a faith that was intimately united to **Hope, in the tranquil expectancy of a fulfillment** still hidden in the shroud of mystery, but of which she was certain, **banking on the certitude of the tendency of faith**. As Origen noted so well, she knew that there would be a moment in which that which was hidden in Him would be manifest in God's own time.

[4] Therefore, Mary who **conserved all these things in her heart**, confronting them in her heart, comparing them one with the other, **she is the perfect model of this New Heart** which the prophets promised [cf. Ezk 36:26]. This **New Heart is the privileged seat of the New Covenant of Mercy** [cf. Jr 31:33]. **It is only in a heart of this kind that faith might be deepened, intensified, broadened**. The Heart of Mary is the first human heart in which this New Covenant of Mercy is realized, that New Covenant between humanity and God .




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<sup>11</sup> Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, # 17.

## FINAL REFLECTIONS

### Jesus as the Sheep-Gate<sup>12</sup>

In this symbol Jesus is presented as the Gate leading to Salvation – this is a Gate, not so much for the Shepherd, but for the Sheep. All must pass through the gate that is Jesus in order to be saved. He has already come to bring life to the Sheep. This explanation has little to do with the parable of vv. 1-3 a, and we may have here an adapted saying of Jesus from another context. If v. 10 is looked upon as an isolated saying it is very close to Mk 2:17. The idea on v. 10 resembles that of Jn 14:6: I am the way... no one comes to the Father except through Me [cf. also Rv 3:7-8]. *This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall pass through it.* Blessed be he who enters in the Name of the Lord! [cf. Ps 118: 26].

Jesus is the Gate of the Father through which enter Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the Prophets and the Apostles and the Church. In Mt 7:13, Jesus speaks of the narrow gate which alone leads to salvation. As the Father sent Me now I send you! The only door into the Reign of God is the Son of God – no one can enter otherwise than through , the Son, the Universal Savior of humanity.

Those who go in and out through the Gate [v. 10, find pasture. The reference here seems to be the fullness of life. Jesus supplies the Living Water and the Bread of Life – Tabernacles is the Final Harvest celebration for a Liturgical week.

## A HARMONY OF FESTIVALS:

### The Sacred Heart and Mercy Sunday

#### Reflections on the Sacred Heart from 20<sup>th</sup> Century Popes

#### [A] Professor Stackpole's Thought

#### 'Another Fresh Stream'

#### The Sacred Heart of Jesus and The Divine Mercy, By Dr. Robert Stackpole, STD (Jun 12, 2012)

*[June is dedicated to The Sacred Heart of Jesus. The following is a series of excerpts from Jesus, Mercy Incarnate, Marian Press, 2000 (currently out of print), by Dr. Robert Stackpole, STD, director of the John Paul II Institute of Divine Mercy. The series explores the relationship between The Sacred Heart and The Divine Mercy.]*

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. R. Brown, *Gospel of John*. Anchor Bible – Yale Press 2008, pp 394, f.]

According to the popes of the last 100 years, there is no devotion more important to the life of the Church than devotion to the Heart of Jesus. For example, in 1899 Pope Leo XIII, in what he called "the greatest act of my pontificate," consecrated the whole world to the Sacred Heart on the threshold of the new century, and he wrote of the Sacred Heart as "the symbol and sensible image of the infinite love of Jesus Christ."

In 1928<sup>13</sup>, in his encyclical "*Miserentissimus Redemptor*," Pope Pius XI taught that devotion to the Heart of Jesus is "the summary of our religion," which, if practiced, "will most surely lead us to know intimately Jesus Christ, and will cause our hearts to love Him more tenderly and to imitate Him more generously." Then in 1956, in his famous encyclical on the Sacred Heart "*Haurietis Aquas*," Pope Pius XII was even more effusive than his predecessors in praise of this devotion:

It is altogether impossible to enumerate the heavenly gifts which devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has poured out on the souls of the faithful, purifying them, offering them heavenly strength, rousing them to the attainment of all virtues ...

Consequently, the honor paid to the Sacred Heart is such as to raise it to the rank — so far as external practice is concerned — of the highest expression of Christian piety. For this is the religion of Jesus, which is centered on the Mediator who is man and God, and in such a way that we cannot reach the Heart of God, save through the Heart of Christ...

After the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI pleaded with the Church not to forget the devotion to the Sacred Heart. In his apostolic letter of 1965, "*Investigabiles Divitias Christi*," he wrote:

*This, therefore, seems to us to be the most suitable ideal: that devotion to the Sacred Heart — which, we are grieved to say, has suffered somewhat in the estimation of some persons — now re-flourishes daily more and more. Let it be esteemed by all as an excellent and acceptable form of true piety...*

In a follow-up letter to the heads of the religious orders, Paul VI was even more emphatic:

*Thus, it is absolutely necessary that the faithful venerate and honor this Heart, in the expression of their private piety as well as in the services of public cult, for of His fullness we have all received; and they must learn*

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<sup>13</sup> cf. Pius XI, *Caritate Christi Compulsi*, May 3, 1932 – On Offering Prayer and Expiation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the present Distress of the Human Race.

*perfectly from Him how they are to live in order to answer the demands of our time.*

Finally, in 1994, the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, promulgated by Pope John Paul II, contains the following remarkable statement about the importance of the symbol of the Heart of Jesus (no. 478):

*The Sacred Heart of Jesus, pierced by our sins and for our salvation, "is quite rightly considered the chief sign and symbol of that ... love with which the divine Redeemer continually loves the eternal Father and all human beings" without exception.*

We need not belabor the point. Suffice it to say that for more than a century now, the successors of St. Peter have repeatedly exhorted the faithful to honor the Heart of Jesus, and to practice this devotion with love and zeal.

The popes have good reason for this recommendation, for the devotion to the Heart of Jesus has an impressive pedigree. It is rooted in the gospels, in our Lord's call: "Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Mt 11: 28-29). Again, our Lord cried out on the feast of the tabernacles: "If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink ... as the scripture has said 'Out of His Heart shall flow rivers of living water' " (Jn 7:37-38). In the Heart of Jesus, therefore, we can find rest for our soul's weariness, and refreshment for our soul's thirst. All this was made manifest on the Cross, when His side was opened by the lance, and out of His Heart flowed streams of water and blood (Jn 19:34), symbolic of all the graces of Baptism and the Eucharist.

Many great saints have had a special devotion to the Heart of Jesus, including St. Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Albert the Great, St. Bonaventure, St. Lutgard, St. Gertrude the Great, St. Peter Canisius, St. Francis De Sales, St. John Eudes, St. Claude De La Colombiere, St. Alphonsus Liguori, St. Madeleine Sophie Barat and Bl. Dina Belanger. The greatest impetus toward the spread of this devotion, however, came from the apparitions of our Lord Jesus Himself to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque in the 1670s. To her the glorified Jesus unveiled His tender, burning love for souls, and through her He asked for the establishment of the annual liturgical feast of the Sacred Heart, as well as devotional practices such as the Holy Hour, the First Friday Communion, and the veneration of the image of His loving Heart. By these means our Lord intended to rekindle the fire of love in the hearts of the faithful, in a modern world in which the hearts of many were growing cold.



Hence, rooted in scripture, the delight of many saints, and given the highest endorsement by the popes again and again, it is clear that *the devotion to the Heart of Jesus — especially to the living Heart of Jesus in the Eucharist — is vital to the life and spiritual health of the Catholic Church*. Simply put: A living body needs a living heart, and the Church, the Body of Christ, has its own living heart: we have been given the Heart of Jesus Christ, the Head of the Body, as our Heart, too, the living source of all our spiritual refreshment and peace.

In the twentieth century, however, from out of the heart of the Polish nation, our Lord has poured another fresh stream of devotion into His Church. It began when a simple Polish nun, Sr. Faustina Kowalska (1905-1938), with barely a third-grade education, wrote her *Diary*, which has been recognized as worthy of being numbered among the outstanding works of mystical literature. Now declared "Saint" Faustina Kowalska, she has been called by Pope John Paul II "the great apostle of Divine Mercy in our time." In St. Faustina we find a holy soul completely devoted to the Heart of Jesus, but in a new way. As she recorded in her *Diary*:

*He brought me into such close intimacy with Himself that my Heart was espoused to His Heart in a loving union, and I could feel the faintest stir of His Heart, and He of mine. The fire of my created love was joined with the ardor of His eternal love.*

*O my Jesus, each of your saints reflects one of your virtues; I desire to reflect Your compassionate Heart, full of mercy; I want to glorify it. Let Your Mercy, O Jesus, be impressed upon my heart and soul like a seal, and this will be my badge in this and the future life.*

On several occasions Christ Himself emphasized that His Heart is the source of Divine Mercy for the world:

*My daughter, know that My Heart is mercy itself. From this sea of mercy graces flow out upon the whole world. No soul that has approached Me has ever gone away un-consolated. All misery gets buried in the depths of My mercy, and every saving and sanctifying grace flows from this fountain.*

In another passage in her *Diary*, St. Faustina poured out her soul in adoration of the living Heart of Jesus in the Eucharist:

*O living Host, my one and only strength, fountain of love and mercy, embrace the whole world, and fortify faint souls. Oh, blessed be the instant and the moment when Jesus left us His most merciful Heart.*

*Clearly, for St. Faustina, the center of her life, her first love, was the Merciful Heart of Jesus. Her devotion was to the Sacred Heart, but focused on the merciful love that flows to us from His Heart.*

Much like the traditional devotion to the Sacred Heart, our Lord gave to St. Faustina new forms in which His Merciful Heart was to be honored, and new vessels for a fresh outpouring of His grace: the Image of The Divine Mercy, new prayers such as the Chaplet of The Divine Mercy and the prayers for the three o'clock Hour of Mercy, and, of course, a new feast for the universal Church — the Feast of The Divine Mercy, intended for the Sunday after Easter.

In fact, all of this received the explicit endorsement and encouragement of Pope John Paul II in his address at the tomb of St. Faustina in Cracow in the summer of 1997. His remarks on that occasion largely echoed the words he spoke at the beatification of Sr. Faustina in Rome on April 18, 1993:

Her mission continues, and is yielding astonishing fruit. It is truly marvelous how her devotion to the merciful Jesus is spreading in our contemporary world and gaining so many human hearts! This is doubtless a sign of the times — a sign of our 20th century. The balance of this century, which is now ending presents a deep restlessness and fear of the future. Where, if not in the Divine Mercy, can the world find refuge and the light of hope? Believers understand that perfectly...

**[B]     PAUL VI**

**Intestigabiles Dvities Christi – February 6, 1965**

In this Apostolic letter for the second centenary of the institution of the liturgical Feast in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Pope Paul VI teaches: ... the unfathomable riches of Christ [Ep 3:8], flowing forth from the pierced side of the Divine redeemer in that moment as He was dying on the Cross, He reconciled the human race with the Heavenly Father. This has been placed in such fulgent light in these last times due to the progress of the worship of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and what most joyful fruits have been derived from this in behalf of the Church.

In fact, after our Merciful Savior, appearing, as has been related, to that chosen religious Sister Margaret Mary Alacoque in the town of Paray-le-Monial repeatedly asked that all human beings, as though in a public competition of prayer, might honor His Heart, wounded out of love for us – and in every manner possible - might offer reparation for offenses accumulated against It. This devotion to the Sacred Heart – already offered in different places by the work and the

impulse brought to the devotion by St. John Eudes – it marvelously flourished among the clergy and the Christian people, and was diffused in all continents.

The Apostolic See brought a coronation to this veneration, when on February 6, 1765, Clement CIII, Our Predecessor of venerated memory, by acceding to the requests of the Bishops of Poland and in the Arch Confraternity, entitled in honor of the Heart of Jesus, granted to the Noble Polish nation and to the above mentioned Roman Sodality the authorization of celebrating the Liturgical Feast in Honor of the sacred Heart, with the proper Office and Mass, and so approved by means of a Decree relating to all this, that emanated from the Sacred Congregation of Rites, on January 26, of that year [cf. Pius XII, Encyclical Letter, *Haurietis Aquas* : AAS 48 (1956), p. 341; A Gardellini, *Decreta authentica* S.R.C., t. II, 1856, n. 4326; t. III, n. 4579, 3.

And so it happened that just about 75 years after the death of the humble Visitandine Sister, there would come into regular use and with its own rites in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus: and this was welcomed and received not only by the King, and by the Bishops and by the faithful of Poland united now as members of the Roman Arch Confraternity, by this entire beloved City, by the Bishops and by the Queen of the French Nation, by the superiors and by the religious of the Company of Jesus, so that in a brief period of time the worship of the Sacred Heart was extended to practically the entire Church. This inspired in the Church outstanding fruits of holiness.

It is with great joy that we have come to understand that here and there, indeed there are some preparations for the solemn commemorations, for the second centenary of this joyous institution: and this is going to take place above all in the Diocese of Autun, in which the town of Paray-le-Monial is found, especially in that splendid temple which was built there, and to which flow from all parts of the world, pious crowds of pilgrims, who come to venerate that place where, as is believed, the secrets of the Heart of Jesus were so marvelously revealed and were then diffused all over the world.

This is why, that it is indeed our desires, indeed our Will: that on this occasion, the institution of the Feast of the Sacred Heart, placed opportunely under the light, that it be celebrated with all regard by all of you, Venerable Brothers, who are the Bishops of the Church of God, and by the populations entrusted to you. We desire that to all the categories of the faithful there be explained in the most suitable and complete manner the most profound and renowned doctrinal foundations, which illustrate the infinite treasures of the charity of the Sacred Heart; and that there be indicated those sacred functions that might enkindled ever more the devotion toward this worship, worthy of the

most high consideration, for the scope of obtaining the result that all Christians, animated by new dispositions of spirit, might offer that due honor to that divine Heart. That they might make reparation for the numberless sins with manifestations of obsequious service, ever more fervent, and they might conform their entire lives to the precepts of charity which is *the fulfillment of the Law* [cf. Rm 13:10].

Since indeed the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, *that ardent furnace of charity*, and symbol and expressive image of that eternal love, in which *God has so loved the world, that He gave up His only-begotten Son* [Jn 3:16] – we are certain that the afore-mentioned commemorations will contribute a great deal to see to it that the riches of that divine love might be the more profoundly pondered and well understood. And further, we nourish the confidence that all the faithful might know how to draw inspiration ever more resolved to configure their own lives the more to the Gospel, and diligently to emend their ways, to put into practice the Law of the Lord.

But, in the first place we desire that by means of an ever more intense participation in the Sacrament of the Altar, the Heart of Jesus might be honored. Its greatest gift is precisely the Eucharist. In the Eucharistic sacrifice, in fact, there is immolated and there is received our Savior, *always alive to intercede for us* [Heb 7:25]. This Heart was pierced opened by the soldier's lance, and poured out over humanity that flood of His Most Precious Blood, mixed with water. In this sublime sacrament, furthermore, which is the culmination and the center of all the other sacraments, that spiritual sweetness is tasted from its very source, and there is remembered that outstanding charity, which Christ has shown in His Passion [St. Thomas Aquinas, Opusculum 57].

Therefore, it is necessary that – to use the very words of St. John Damascene – *let us draw near to Him with an ardent desire... so that the fire of our desire, receiving it as the ardor of the furnace... and this this mist destroy, by burning them, our sins and enlighten our hearts, and in this manner, in the habitual contact with the divine fire, we might also become ardent, and also become more like God*. [St. John Damascene, *De Fide Orthod.*, 4, 13: PG 94, 1150].

This idea seems to us as the most sublimely suitable so that the Worship of the Sacred Heart – and we say this with sorrow – that even should it be that in some this is somewhat weakened, might re-flourish every day the more, and that it be the more considered as a most noble form, and one that is worthy of that true piety, which in our time, especially by means of Vatican II, that it is insistently requested toward Christ Jesus, *the King and center of all hearts, Head of the*

*Body, which is the Church ... the principle and first-born of those coming to life again, so that in Him might reside all the primacy ... [Col 1:18].*

And just as the most sacred Ecumenical Council greatly recommends those *pious practices be undertaken anew ... especially when these have been offered out of the express will of the Apostolic See [Vatican II, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, SC 13].* This form of devotion seems that it must be much insisted upon: in fact, as we have recalled above, this consists essentially in the adoration and reparation worthily offered to Christ. And this is based above all on the Eucharist, from which, as from all other liturgical actions, *there might be achieved that sanctification of human beings in Christ, and that glorification of God to which all the other works of the Church, tend as toward their ultimate end...* (Vatican II, SC 10]...

**[C] Pope John Paul II,  
Address at Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus  
Sunday, 6 June 1999**

... 5. Dear Brothers and Sisters, let us contemplate the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which is the source of life, since by means of it victory over death was achieved. It is also the source of holiness, since in it sin — the enemy of man's spiritual development — is defeated. The Heart of the Lord Jesus is the starting-point of the holiness of each one of us. From the Heart of the Lord Jesus let us learn the love of God and understanding of the mystery of sin — *mysterium iniquitatis*.

Let us make acts of reparation to the Divine Heart for the sins committed by us and by our fellow men. Let us make reparation for rejecting God's goodness and love.

Let us draw close each day to this fount from which flow springs of living water. Let us cry out with the Samaritan woman "Give us this water", for it wells up to eternal life.

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**FINALE**

The Liturgy would also teach the dogmatic fact that there is no distinction in the mystery of the Stigmata — the 'sorrowful' and 'glorious' dimensions are one mystery. More effectively, it might lead us all to heal the divisions that exist among us.

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