

Solemnity of Most Sacred Heart of Jesus (B)

Gospel text (Jn 19,31-37): Since it was preparation day, in order that the bodies might not remain on the cross on the sabbath, for the sabbath day of that week was a solemn one, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs be broken and they be taken down. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and then of the other one who was crucified with Jesus.

But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but one soldier thrust his lance into his side, and immediately blood and water flowed out. An eyewitness has testified, and his testimony is true; he knows that he is speaking the truth, so that you also may come to believe. For this happened so that the Scripture passage might be fulfilled: Not a bone of it will be broken. And again another passage says: They will look upon him whom they have pierced.

«One soldier thrust his lance into his side»

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Today, before our very eyes —or even better, before our interior eyes illuminated by faith— the figure of Christ just died on the Cross is offered to us, with his side pierced by the Centurion's spear. “Immediately blood and water flowed out” (Jn 19,34). What a distressing but at the same time eloquent sight! There is not even the slightest room for doubt: Jesus is 100% dead. What's more, that mysterious “water” which would not have flowed out of a normal healthy body, would indicate, according to modern medicine, that Christ death could be caused by a heart attack or by a “burst heart”, as it would have been described at that time.

Christ therefore has truly died, and He has died either by our sins or by what He desired with most urgency, the cancellation of our sins. “With my death, I have defeated death and have exalted Man to the sublimity of Heaven” (Melito of Sardis). God, who has kept his promise of raising his Son from the dead, will also keep a second promise: He will also raise us from the dead and will seat us at His right hand. He requires of us a small condition though: to believe in Him and to let us be saved by Him. God never imposes himself on anybody at the expense of his human liberty.

About that Man whose heart they wounded: “They will look upon the man whom they have pierced” the Apocalypse also confirms: “Behold, he is coming amid the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him” (Rev 1,7). This is a sacred requirement of the divine justice: even those who have obstinately rejected Him, they will have to recognize the truth in the end. Even the self-idolizing tyrant, the ruthless killer, the arrogant atheist... All of them without exception will be compelled to kneel down before Him, acknowledging Him as the one and only true God. Isn't it better to become friends with Him from now on?