Solemnity of Most Sacred Heart of Jesus (B)

Gospel text (*Jn* 19:31-37): Now 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”

Fr. Raimondo M. SORGIA Mannai OP
(San Domenico di Fiesole, Florencia, Italy)

Today we are offered before our bodily eyes—better yet, before our “inner eyes,” illuminated by faith—the figure of Christ who, having just died on the Cross, had his side opened by a spear thrust by the centurion. "Immediately blood and water flowed out" (Jn 19:34). A distressing and, at the same time, most eloquent sight! There is not the slightest room to support the thesis of someone who affirms an apparent death: Jesus is certainly 100% dead. What's more, that mysterious "water," which would not come out of a healthy, normal body, tells us according to modern medicine that Christ must have died from a heart attack or, as our ancestors said, from a burst heart. Only in this case is the separation of serum from red blood cells verified. This would explain that anomalous “blood and water.”

Christ, therefore, has truly died, and he has died because of our sins, because of his most vivid and main desire: to be able to cancel our sins. "I am the one who destroyed death and carried off man to the heights of heaven" (Melito of Sardis). God, who has kept the promise of raising his Son from the dead, will also keep the second promise: he will also raise us up and lift us up to his own right hand. But he sets a minimum condition: believe in Him and allow ourselves to be saved by Him. God does not impose his love on anyone to the detriment of human freedom.

Finally, regarding that Man who has suffered the spear in his heart, "They will look upon him whom they have pierced" (Jn 19:37), Revelation 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 demand of divine justice: in the end, even those who have stubbornly rejected him, will have to recognize him. Even the self-idolizing tyrant, the ruthless murderer, the arrogant atheist..., all without exception will be constrained to kneel before Him, recognizing Him as the one true God. Isn't it better, then, to be friends with him from now on?

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “From this divine heart three streams flow endlessly. The first is the stream of mercy for sinners. The second is the stream of charity. From the third stream flow love and light for the benefit of his friends.” (Saint Margaret Alacoque)

- “Mercy: the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us: the bridge that connects God and man.” (Francis)

- “The prayer of the Church venerates and honors the Heart of Jesus just as it invokes his most holy name. It adores the incarnate Word and his Heart which, out of love for men, he allowed to be pierced by our sins (...)” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nº 2669)