

Our Lord's Thoughts on Holy Thursday

On February 4, 1890 Leonardo and Lucia Menendez of Madrid, Spain had the first of their 6 children – a daughter whom they named Josefa Maria. Josefa was a pious and devoted young girl who delighted in learning the faith, especially about the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which had been introduced to her by their parish priest. Although her piety and devotion were perhaps more heartfelt and zealous than that of others, especially kids her age, there seemed to be nothing spectacular about her. Much the same, I suppose, could be said for the daughter of a lady named Ann from Nazareth, whose name was Mary. But God does not see as man sees. With her simplicity and humility, Josefa remained almost entirely unnoticed throughout her short life – she died at 33 years of age; her life on this side of eternity, however, was anything but ordinary. In 1919 she entered the Les Feuillants Convent of the Society of the Sacred Heart in Poitiers, France. Although her interior life with our Lord was already quite pronounced, it was here that Jesus Himself would appear to her numerous times with a message for the whole world. The words of our Lord to Sr (now Blessed) Josefa Menedez have been published in a book called: The Way of Divine of Love. They are some of the most striking I have ever heard or read. Our Lord began by recounting to Josefa His thoughts on Holy Thursday. These are some of those words....

Jesus to Sr. Josefa:

“I want to tell them of the poignant sorrows which filled My Heart at the Last Supper. If it was bliss for Me to think of all those to whom I should be both Companion and Heavenly Food, of all who would surround Me to the end of time with adoration, reparation, and love, this in no wise diminished My grief at the many who would leave Me deserted in My tabernacle and who would not even believe in My Real Presence. Into how many hearts defiled by sin would I not have to enter, and how often this profanation of My Body and Blood would serve for their ultimate condemnation.

Let us go to Gethsemane, and may your heart be immersed in the feelings of bitterness and sadness with which Mine was submerged. After having preached to great crowds, healed the sick, given sight to the blind, raised the dead, after having lived three years with My Apostles to train them and teach My doctrine to them, I finally willed to teach them by example how to love one another, to put up with one another, and how mutually to serve each other; and this I did by washing their feet and making Myself their food. The hour had come for the Son of God made man, Redeemer of the human race, to shed His blood and give His life for the world. And that I might surrender Myself to My Father's will I forthwith betook Myself to prayer.

Dearly loved souls, come and learn from your Model that the one thing necessary, whatever the revolts of nature, is surrender to God's Will in humble submission and by a supreme act of the will to accomplish the Will of God whatever the circumstances may be. Learn also from Him that all important actions should be preceded and vivified by prayer, for only in prayer can a soul obtain the strength needed in life's difficulties. In prayer God will communicate Himself, will counsel and inspire, even if His action be unfelt.

I withdrew into the Garden of Gethsemane, that is to say into solitude. God is to be sought within, away from distraction and noise. To find Him the soul must enforce silence on all the disturbances by which nature often fights against grace; on interior arguments prompted by self-love or sensuality. These constantly tend to stifle the inspirations of grace and keep her from finding God within. After these words. Our Lord continued: Adore His Will for you, whatever it is, and humble yourself as befits a creature before its Creator. It was thus I offered Myself to carry out the Redemption of the world.

At the same moment I felt all the torments of My Passion burst overwhelmingly upon Me: the calumnies and the insults, the scourging and the Crown of Thorns, the thirst, the Cross. All these sufferings thronged before My eyes and pressed upon My Heart, while at one and the same time I saw all the offenses, sins and crimes that were to be committed throughout the ages. I not only witnessed them all, but was invested in them so that under the burden of their ignominy I was constrained to present Myself before the face of My all-holy Father and implore Him to show mercy.

And there burst upon Me the wrath of an angry and offended God, and in order to appease His Majesty I offered myself as security for sinful man, I, His Son, to calm His anger and satisfy His Justice. But so great was the anguish and so mortal the agony of My human nature under the strain and weight of so much guilt, that a bloody sweat poured from Me to the ground.

Oh sinners who thus torture Me... will this blood bring salvation and life, or will it be shed in vain for you? How can I express My sorrow at the thought of this sweat, this anguish, this agony, this blood, useless for so many souls. That is enough for today, Josefa. Console My Heart; tomorrow we shall go on. Jesus returned and continued as follows:

And now let us continue our prayer in Gethsemane: Draw near Me, and when you see Me submerged in an ocean of grief, rise, and go with Me to the three disciples whom I had left a stone's throw away. I had chosen them that they might share My agony, pray with Me and by their company afford Me some consolation. What were My feelings to find them asleep? Oh the pang of loneliness, and to have none to share in My sorrow. How often My Heart suffers this same grief; how often, hoping to find solace among the souls It loves, It finds them slumbering!

It is useless for Me to attempt to awaken them, to make them leave themselves and their preoccupations, their vain and fruitless conversations, too often the reply that reaches Me in act if not in words amounts to: 'I cannot now, I am too busy, too tired, I need repose.' Then gently insisting I say to this soul 'Come for a little while. Come and pray with Me, I need you, do not be afraid of sacrificing your rest for Me; I will be your reward.' And the same answer is repeated. Poor sleeping souls who cannot watch one hour with Me. Beloved souls, learn from this how useless it is to seek comfort in creatures. How often you will receive only an increase of distress because they are asleep and respond neither to your hope nor love.

I went back to My prayer, and again falling on My face I worshipped My Father and implored His help. I did not call Him 'My God' but 'My Father.' It is when harrowed with pain that you too must call God your Father. Beg for His help, expose your woes, your fears, your longings, and let your cry of anguish remind Him that you are His child. Tell Him that your body is exhausted, your heart is sorrowful even unto death, that your soul is experiencing what seems a very sweat of blood. Pray with a child's confidence and expect relief from your Father's Heart. He Himself will comfort you and give you the strength necessary to endure the tribulation or suffering, whether it be your own or that of the souls confided to your care.

My soul, already shattered and a prey to sadness, had to endure still more deadly grief, for crushed by the weight of the sins of men, and in return for so much suffering and love, I saw only outrages and ingratitude. The blood now pouring from My body and which I was soon to shed from countless wounds would be in vain for so many souls, many would be lost, a still greater number would sin against Me, and myriads would not so much as hear My name. I would pour out My blood for all, offer My merits to each soul, Blood of a God, infinite merits, yet to be in vain for how great a number!

Yes, I will shed My blood for all and all will be loved with great love but for some that love will be more tender, more intimate, more ardent. Alas! At this moment I see how many will turn away from Me. Poor soul! is this how you begin to go to sleep? Soon I shall return and as you are asleep you will not hear Me. I shall offer you My grace and you will not receive it. Is there any hope that later on you will be roused? Must one not fear that you will grow weak through lack of food and be unable to throw off your lethargy? Beloved souls, know that death has stolen upon masses while they were thus sleeping soundly! Where and by what means have they been awakened? How often must I speak thus to the souls I love so dearly?...Ah! how infinitely sorrowful for the Heart of God, whose is boundless, to see so many insensibly approaching nearer and nearer the abyss. That will suffice for today, Josefa.”

Can we hear these words and remain unmoved? Perhaps we will continue at some point with other things our Lord said to Sr. Josefa, especially His “appeal to the world.” For now, this will give us much to meditate on this Lenten season and as we approach the Triduum. God bless you, Fr Kuhn.