

Below is a transcription of the audio file of the Catechism Class given 11-28-10.

Last week, we were beginning our review of the lessons of Calvary, because now we are speaking about the Fourth Article of the Creed, “Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.” We were speaking about the lesson of Calvary, and what it is that happens when someone commits a mortal sin.

In every single act of a mortal sin we find a double evil. First, mortal sin is a turning away from God. It is a refusal to be obedient to Him from Whom we receive existence, and He keeps us in existence each moment. Mortal sin is also a practical rejection of the first consequence of our position of dependence on the Most High. It is an act of disobedience to God Who is not only our Creator, but also our Father, Who in His goodness, has opened to us the entry into His own happiness. In other words, mortal sin is a turning away from God, refusing to be subject to Him.

That is the great lesson of Calvary that Jesus Christ came to teach us: to be obedient, even obedient unto death. Our mortal sin is an act of unwillingness. In the first place then, to repair for that, would include an act of willing submission to God. That is an act of loving and practical acknowledgement of the creature’s total dependence on God and of God’s supreme dominion over the creature.

This act of subjection is the essential and central act of the work of atonement. Without it, atonement cannot be made. To explain that, we realize that if a child is disobedient to its parents and refuses to submit to their lawful commands, there can be no pardon given (if you follow reason and true justice) until that child submits and does what the parents direct it to do. In the spiritual life, it is very much the same. As the essence of sin is refusing to submit to God’s authority, so the essence of atonement is willing submission to God’s authority.

That is why we cannot commit sin without an act of the will. A mortal sin requires those three things: 1) grievous matter; 2) sufficient reflection; 3) full consent of the will. Just as it takes an act of the will to commit the sin, it takes an act of the will to make an act of perfect love of God which could forgive that sin.

Saint Paul puts this before us about the necessity of the essence of atonement when he says: As by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners; so also by the obedience of One, many shall be made just. If we examine the case of the sin of Adam, we should easily realize that to make perfect atonement for his sin, this act of submission to God must be made; first, not only by a Person of infinite dignity since the dignity of the Person offended is infinite, but also by a Person Who is the representative of the whole human race, for the whole human race had sinned in Adam, as Saint Paul tells us: In whom all sinned.

Therefore, Jesus Christ came and redeemed us and we begin the holy season of Advent today to remind us of the coming of Jesus Christ. It took Jesus Christ to fulfill these two necessary conditions to atone for the sin of Adam. The first condition required was; the dignity of this person had to be infinite. The second condition, as man, Jesus was a representative and official Head of the human race as Adam was. St. Paul refers to this when he speaks of Christ as the last Adam and when he speaks of Adam as the figure of Him Who was to come; that is, of Christ Who was the new Adam.

Not only did Jesus Christ atone for the sins of Adam, but we also know that Our Lord atoned also for our own personal sins and the sins of every human being since Adam and Eve. St. Peter reminds us of this when he says: Christ bore our sins in His Body on the tree. Jesus Christ was our representative. Isaiah said long before that time: The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all. As the Head of the human race, all the sins of men were laid upon Jesus. Then, when you meditate on your Crucifix and on the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ, do you understand why He suffered so much to atone for the sins of all mankind?

So let us pray for the grace to penetrate into this mystery of Our Lord’s act of atonement as far as our finite minds permit us. We must keep in mind that in Jesus Christ, as we have seen, there are two distinct natures; therefore, two distinct wills: the divine Will and a distinct human will. Jesus Christ Himself taught us that as He said: I am come down from Heaven not that I might do My will, but the Will of Him that sent Me.

We are so much impressed with the divine Person in Our Lord. It occupies our imagination and our mind so completely that we may, perhaps, not keep clearly enough before us the two distinct wills that were in Jesus. When we do think of His human nature, we are liable to look on it as giving Him a capacity for labor and for suffering. We can easily forget that it involved a human will, which was distinct from the divine Will. Sometimes in our meditations, we may only reflect upon the human nature of Jesus Christ. In the act of atonement, Our Lord’s human mind recognized the divine authority and His human will submitted itself absolutely and lovingly to the divine Will and all that the divine Will decreed.

Those on the call today probably already know, but I would remind us, that that is the summit of our own spiritual perfection: to submit our will absolutely and lovingly to the divine Will in everything that the divine Will decrees for us during our entire lifetime. That is the absolute form of perfection; absolute conformity to the holy Will of God. That comes about by this act of the will of which we have been speaking. That is the lesson that Calvary should teach each one of us.

The submission of the human mind and will was a perfect acknowledgement of God's supreme dominion and of the absolute dependence of all creatures, even of the created human nature and the created human will of the Lord Himself. It was an act of absolute adoration. As we pray the Stations of the Cross (I assume you pray them at least every Friday), at the beginning of each station, do not we pray, "We adore Thee O Christ and we bless Thee because by the Holy Cross, Thou hast redeemed the world."

Consider now what was included in this act of Jesus Christ submitting His human will to His divine Will. The filial submission of Our Lord's human will to the divine Will involved submission to all that the divine Will desired and decreed. Now it was the divine Will that Our Lord's obedience should be manifested by His actual and willing subjection to the life and work appointed to Him. Jesus was sent into the world of fallen and perverted men that He might give an example of a perfect life and that He might preach.

Jesus Himself said that He came to give testimony to the Truth. Christ adapted and accepted the mission and all it involved: Behold I come to do Thy Will, O God. Our Divine Redeemer clearly foresaw that His life in teaching would involve the passion and death, for the leaders of the Jews would rise against the Preacher of Truth. His life and His doctrine contradicted their views and His power made them envious. They would do away with Him by having Him crucified. It was the divine Will that Our Lord should accept all the consequences of His life and His teachings and even the pains of the Passion.

Now Our Lord's human will submitted reverently and lovingly to the death He had foreseen. This bearing of death, as an expression of His obedience, He offered to God in atonement for the sin of Adam and for all sins. It was an act offered by a Person of infinite dignity. It was an act offered by One Who was constituted by God as Head and Representative and King of the human race. By this act of submission, Jesus Christ repaired the refusal of submission to the divine authority, which is the first evil in sin. As by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners, so also by the obedience of One, many shall be made just.

Our Lord's own words bring out very clearly the fact that the Passion was an act of obedience. A considerable time before the close of His life, Jesus said: No man taketh It away from Me (which means no man taketh away My life from Me), but I lay It down of Myself; and I have power to lay It down and I have power to take It up again. This commandment I have received from My Father. So, do we understand what St. John was writing when he told us this? The Father gave Jesus the commandment to lay down His life that He might take It up again.

At the Last Supper, the last words of Jesus before leaving for Gethsemane were: As the Father has given Me commandment, so I act; arise, let us go hence. Can this life of Jesus Christ be the way that we also imitate Him? Can that be truthfully said of each one of us? As the Father has given me commandment, so I act. If only we would keep all of the commandments that God lays upon us, we would be perfect.

In the Garden of Gethsemane just before Jesus was taken prisoner, He again repeated the same truth saying: The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it? Do we understand now what it means to have a submissive will to the Will of God? Jesus repeatedly sets us an example of what perfection is all about. The fundamental characteristics of Our Lord's work in atonement for sin was, therefore, the fact that it was an act of obedience, even obedience unto death.

This way of looking at the Passion is that which the Church puts before us in Holy Week (as I have mentioned before, I think, on a previous conference call). The liturgy of the ceremony of blessing the palms deals with the events of Palm Sunday, the first day of Holy Week, this great week of the year; but, the liturgy of the Mass which follows is devoted to the Passion. There is almost like two Masses if you recall what happens on Palm Sunday. First, there is the blessing of the palms with its own gospel and everything. Then, there is the Mass that is dedicated to the Passion, and we begin by reading the Passion of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, according to the Gospel of St. Matthew. During this Mass, the epistle chosen contains the words of St. Paul telling us that Christ was made obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross.

So, if we only would follow the liturgy closely of the infallible Church, we realize that the Church selects these words as expressing the way She looks at the Passion. During the last days of the week, She repeats them in every one of the canonical hours of each day. She repeats them in the church, in the refectory, and every place in religious houses. They evidently express Her predominant thought. Our Holy Mother the Church leaves aside the multitude of beautiful texts of Scripture that speak of His Passion and She keeps to this one. By so doing, the Church teaches us that the Passion, before all else, was an act of obedience, and that by this obedience of Jesus Christ, the disorder of sin was satisfied.

This great act of satisfaction for sin suggests some questions, the consideration of which, will lead us to a deeper wonder and more grateful appreciation of God's love for men. A question that probably comes to mind is this: why was the obedience asked of Christ so difficult? The supreme malice of sin is in the refusal of a creature to be subject and obedient to the Creator; this malice was repaired by Our Lord's obedience.

The smallest act of obedience made by Christ would be sufficient to atone for all sins. Why, then, did His heavenly Father wish Jesus to be obedient unto death? The text of St. Paul, which the Church repeats so often in Holy Week, gives an indication of the answer. In the words of the apostle the infallible Church has added, as an explanation, the words "for us." Christ was made obedient unto death "for us." From the Creed, we learn that He was crucified "for us." It was for our advantage, therefore, that the obedience was so extreme. It was for love of us that His obedience was unto death. For to love is to wish what is good to a person and to do all one can to secure that good. To understand how this was so will lead us to return love for love.

The obedience of Christ in the Passion is a revelation of the wickedness of refusing to be subject to God. The Passion was divinely chosen that men might have some idea of what sin really is, and thus, to be lead to avoid it. From this point of view, the divine choice of the Passion is simply overwhelming in the light it throws on sin. The atoning act of obedience on Calvary brings before us the fundamental wrongness of the disobedience of mortal sin. It brings before us how sin goes to the very depths of creation and attacks its immediate consequences. This it does by rejecting what is the very first duty of all rational beings, namely, the fundamental obligation of being subject to God.

God alone is really supreme. He supports in existence all creatures. It is of their very nature to be dependent on God. As we understand sin in this light, it is disobedience to our Creator. Then we see the malice of it, the more we meditate on the Passion of Jesus Christ. How clearly the divine goodness shines out in the Passion. God descending in love to the very depths of submission even to pain, extreme pain and shame, that He might bring home to us, His fallen creatures, the immensity of the wickedness of refusing to be subject to our Creator and our Father. How true are the words: Christ loved His own to the end. How true are the words Jesus spoke just before He died on Calvary: It is consummated. Jesus fulfilled everything His heavenly Father asked Him to do. So let us pray for the grace to imitate Jesus in fulfilling the Will of our heavenly Father in perfect obedience to all of His commands.

The obedience of Jesus Christ in the Passion also reveals the perfection of His submission and subjection to His Father. With minds darkened through original sin, men would not realize the completeness of the loving subjection of the human will of Christ, except by a proportionate sign. They would not realize how the Savior's life was marked by unreserved surrender to His Father's will, except by an overwhelming sign. The sign chosen was the willing bearing of pain, of atrocious and prolonged pain, and finally, the acceptance of death itself through obedience.

Our Lord expressed the fact of His willing subjection to death when He said: Therefore, doth the Father love Me because I lay down My life that I may take It up again. No man taketh It away from Me, but I lay It down of Myself, and I have power to lay It down and I have power to take It up again. This commandment have I received of My Father.

This death, lovingly accepted, was in very truth a most clear expression of complete and total subjection to God, the sovereign Lord of all things. It was an act of adoration, absolutely perfect; an act of adoration that was more pleasing than the sin was displeasing. That is what the Sacrifice of the Mass is all about: adoration, thanksgiving, atonement, and reparation. The Mass is a perfect act of adoration and renewal of Calvary, the perfect act of love on the part of God, the Son.

For all of us, it was most necessary that we be convinced of the unreserved surrender of the human will of Jesus to the Will of His heavenly Father. Our advance in sanctity depends on our realizing this, for sanctity

requires that we imitate Jesus in His surrender of will to God. But Jesus is not only our model, Jesus is also our encouragement, our inspiration, the source of our strength. He attracts us to imitation. The contemplation of the obedience of Jesus in the Passion will lead us to want to be obedient. It carries us on the way of obedience; obedience to God and to those that have authority from God.

As obedience characterized all the life of Jesus, so it should characterize all our lives. The law of obedience presses upon everyone. The religious must be obedient in all details of the rule and of all regulations of superiors. The priest must be obedient to the details of Canon Law and to the instructions of his bishop. The child must be obedient to his parents, the wife to her husband, those employed to those who employ them. The supreme obedience of Jesus in His Passion makes all obedience possible and easy; and more than that, to contemplate the Passion as an act of obedience done for our sake to lead us to hate disobedience; not only the supreme disobedience of mortal sin, but even the disobedience of the smallest venial sin. This last is the first step in the way of supreme disobedience, the first step in the way of the eternal ruin from which Our Lord in His obedience strove to preserve us.

As to explain it in another way, there are more or less three categories in which the spiritual life falls: the first would be those of the great lovers of Jesus Christ; then those who have no love; and those in between.

1) Maybe I would compare this to a dart board where people used to throw darts at that circular thing about a foot in diameter. Inside the very small part, they call the bullseye, are only those who constantly and with all their strength (you might say) strive in every way to avoid venial sins. They are the great lovers of Jesus Christ. Only they are secure because only they are in the bullseye in the center of the target on the way to perfection.

2) Then we have the exact opposite, those who live in habitual mortal sin, who very, very seldom, if ever, seriously contemplate the reason they were created and what the Passion of Jesus Christ is all about. They have very basic or little use for the Redemption in their own lives. The way they live is known as worldlings.

3) Others do not take it to such an extreme. There are even people who do meditate on the Passion in kind of an exterior way. They might pray the daily Rosary, look at their Crucifix every day, pray the Stations of the Cross at least once a week on Fridays (or whatever), but it does not have any strong motive and effect upon them to make them great lovers of Jesus Christ. It is more of an exterior, external thing, instead of really making them realize that they must also be obedient and be willing to be obedient unto death; die as a martyr rather than offend God.

Between the two extremes (those who have a real strong resolution, perfect love of God to avoid even every willful venial sin and those who live in habitual mortal sins) are those who are more or less just lukewarm. They are semi-willing to never commit a mortal sin, but they have little scruples about willful venial sin. They are the ones who are on the outside edge of the target. They are still on the target in the sense that they are not yet in the state of mortal sin, but they are not great lovers of Jesus Christ. They are willing to commit venial sins. Sooner or later (and most probably sooner), they will miss the target. They will commit a mortal sin. If we are not willing to avoid every venial sin, then eventually we fall into mortal sin.

So, let it not just be an exterior way of life to us that we meditate on the Passion of Jesus Christ. Let us be resolved to be among His great lovers, those who are striving to such a degree that they never use their self-will opposed to God's Will, committing a willful venial sin. In other words, if they are self-seekers and not true lovers of God, they will eventually fall out of the circle of His great lovers and offend God. If they die in that state, the Passion, death, extreme sufferings of Jesus Christ will be in vain for them for eternity.

In this Fourth Article of the Creed, we are meditating upon "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried." So, if we reflect upon the story of the gospels of Good Friday, Pontius Pilate comes before us in a very special way as a typical self-seeker – of the man who compromised. This is the lesson we should learn from this part of the Creed, "suffered under Pontius Pilate." It is to reflect upon who Pilate was, what he did, and how it is going to affect our own lives.

As I was somewhat saying, there are certain fundamental truths related to Our Lord's Passion, which although very familiar and apparently very simple are only penetrated and realized by prolonged pondering and repeated prayer. To realize even one of them, may have the most far-reaching consequences of our spiritual lives. One such truth is the personal relation of the Passion to myself. Our Lord suffered every pain for me; He accepted every humiliation for my sake. It was all so much for me that it would not be mine in any greater degree if I were the only soul for whom Jesus died.

I would think this is very familiar doctrine to those on the conference call at this time, but its very familiarity seems to prevent our fully grasping its significance. Jesus Christ suffered each pain for me because He wanted to atone for my personal sins. Jesus wanted to take the burden of my sins on Himself. Jesus accepted willingly all the shame and all the humiliations and the distress of mind and pain of body because He wanted to merit for me the graces I need to advance in holiness.

To remember this fundamental truth is most necessary, for we may all be tempted to discouragement either on account of the weight of our past sins or on account of our failure to advance in sanctity. To resist such a temptation, we should recall that Jesus took all our sins on Himself, and that through His Blood, all graces can be ours if we appeal for them through His merits. How generous Jesus Christ has been in bearing all for me. How completely Jesus gave Himself up for me.

I must then serve Him with generosity. I must then surrender myself and surrender my will to Him without reserve. Once we realize and, in a much greater degree, bring the Passion home to ourselves personally that Jesus Christ suffered for love of me (as if I was the only one for whom He died), then we are more willing in a sense, the more we realize why Jesus died for me, the more we are willing to respond to His act of love in return. Anything less than this may lead to my losing Jesus forever (or at least to my never attaining to the union with Him to which, in all His goodness, He has called me).

Hence, to compromise with conscience, to try to serve both God and earthly interests, to give Christ only half-hearted service (half-hearted love), should be regarded with dread and horror. If we are only lukewarm and still willing to commit willful venial sins, we are in grave, grave danger of slipping off altogether, and eventually (probably sooner rather than later) we will commit a mortal sin.

We have in this Article of the Faith the history of man who compromised with conscience. It is set before us in the history of Pontius Pilate. That is the whole great lesson that we learn from “suffered under Pontius Pilate” with regard to Pilate himself. He was a self-seeker who was willing to compromise in regard to what he knew he should have done, but did not do it.

Now the history of a man who compromised with conscience is set before us in the history of Pontius Pilate in the story of Good Friday morning, and puts side-by-side the compromise of this man and the completeness of Our Lord’s generosity. So let us consider this as a means to obtain a greater degree of sanctity. Pilate compromised because he was a lover of self. Jesus Christ, Our Lord, was generous; he was a lover of men. Pilate compromised because he put his personal advantage before all else (his reputation with the emperor and the future promotion he wanted to secure). If given these things he wanted, he would be **just in his judgments** and even generous.

Souls that are self-centered are often so in one point only. They are pious in a way and want to do God’s Will in all things, except the things that concern that one point. They have their pet interest or desires or ambitions. They cling to their own will in this point, and this one thing in which they want their own way, spoils the completeness of their surrender to God and keeps them on a low level of sanctity. This desire to secure the one thing on which their heart is set leads them frequently to compromise. To compromise means to stir a middle course between a great sin and a manifest duty. It implies a want of generosity with God. It is a shrinking from the hardship involved in duty. It is a fear of great sin, but a willingness to commit a smaller sin or at least to be ungenerous with God.

The gospel tells us that on Good Friday when morning was come, all the chief priests and ancients of the people took counsel against Jesus that they might put Him to death. It was the second time that Our Blessed Lord appeared before this tribunal of the Jews. After a short examination, they brought Him bound and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate, the governor. Pilate at that time lived in a fortress called Antonia, which was adjoining the temple on the northern side. There Our Lord was brought.

As the gospel records, the Jews did not go into the governor’s hall themselves lest they might be defiled. What an act of scandal that was! What an act of compromise on their part! They were so hypocritical, they would not enter into the governor’s hall lest they were defiled because of the Jewish law, but they had no scruples about crucifying unto themselves again the Lord Jesus Christ. They took Jesus there in envy to deliver Him up unjustly, but they were so hypocritical they would not enter into the governor’s hall. Let us pray for the grace not to be such hypocrites when we are put in such a position.

If we realize and think about what the gospels tell us, you probably come to know that Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, was the least bad of all the bad men who had a hand in Our Lord's death. Pilate himself was not a very malicious man. His general intentions were good enough, but he was not willing to pay a great price for the carrying out of his good inclinations. It was like so many educated and refined people of the present day, both in the world and in religion, who will be good as long as Goodness does not demand a real sacrifice. In a word, Pilate was a self-seeker.

Our Blessed Lord was not altogether unknown to Pilate. The gospel expressly tells us that Pilate knew the priests had delivered Jesus up through envy. Indeed, the sharp Roman governor would not have been ignorant of the doings of the young Prophet Who was so much talked about, Who had worked such wonderful miracles, and Whose triumphant entry into the city had taken place only four days previously. Pilate, therefore, was rather suspicious of the real nature of the case which the Jewish priests and councils were bringing before him.

When he went out to meet them, at once he asked, what accusation bring you against this Man? They answered, if He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up to Thee. These words show their determination. Pilate then said, take Him you and judge Him according to your law (as if he said, the punishment of the lash which you can inflict ought to be enough for a case like this); but, they avowed, it is not lawful for us to put anyone to death. They wanted death. They made that clear at once. The hypocritical people who would not (so to speak) defile themselves by entering into the temple, wanted nothing less than the death because Jesus was contrary to their wicked way of living.

When the members of the Sanhedrin were pressed for a definite charge against Our Blessed Lord, they brought forward a threefold indictment. We have found this Man first perverting our nation; second, forbidding to give tribute to Caesar; third, saying that He is Christ the King. They wanted a death sentence given for political reasons, not for religious reasons, a sentence of execution by the Romans. The first two accusations could not deceive Pilate. This sudden zeal for Rome was not genuine, but the words "Christ the King," were something new.

Therefore, Pilate turned and reentered the hall and called Jesus before him. The Roman governor was now face to face with our dear Lord. What thoughts and feelings arose in his heart and mind as he looked on the meek Lamb of God? Most likely pity, mingled with a little suspicion. This prisoner did not look like a malefactor and Pilate knew that He was delivered up through envy. The Lord Jesus Christ read his soul and saw a cultivated mind, but an earthbound heart; a man who would like to do the right thing, but who would make no great sacrifice to carry out his good intention.

Jesus had infinite compassion for one who had some good aspiration. Jesus, Who was so silent when accused, was ready to speak at length with Pilate. The governor went straight to the point at once and asked Jesus saying, art Thou the King of the Jews? The answer Jesus intended was to make Pilate think and thus see for himself the injustice of the accusations. Looking up to the governor, Jesus answered: Sayest thou this thing of thyself or have others told it of Me? As if Jesus said, do you really want information or are you only repeating an accusation? If I ever claimed earthy royalty, you certainly would have known about it.

St. John the Evangelist has reserved for us a few lines of the conversation that followed. Our Savior dismissed all idea of earthly royalty from the governor's mind, and lifted the discussion to a different and higher level by saying that His kingdom was not of this world; that He had come into this world to give testimony of the truth. What is truth, said the governor? He hardly thought of the meaning of his words. He wanted to break off the conversation, so he turned away without waiting for an answer. I often think how unfortunate that was and how that is the way in the life of us (at least so often). We do not want to know the answer to the question, what is truth? We do not love the truth, seek the truth, and pray for the grace to follow the truth at all costs.

Pilate turned away because his mind was made up. He saw that the Prisoner was in no way a conspirator or a disturber of the public peace. The very appearance and bearing of Our Savior, His meekness, His dignity, the divine expression on His face. The site of all these things was a grace. Virtue went out from Jesus. The eyes that looked at Peter and so moved him had also looked in pity on the Roman governor. The Voice that spoke as no man had ever spoken and had fascinated even those who were sent to take Him prisoner; the mystic kingdom that was not of this world that was not from hence; the life devoted to giving testimony to the truth. All these things had profoundly impressed Pilate. Grace had almost triumphed at the very outset.

Pilate now knew the Prisoner must be released. It would be a crime to punish in any way such a man. So, Pilate goes out at once to the Jews and declares: I find no cause in Him. If you will meditate on the gospels, Pilate repeated this over and over. He acknowledged that there was no cause of death in Jesus Christ. Pilate just asked what is truth. If he had only really meant the question and accepted the truth and acted upon it, he would be a saint in Heaven today; but he only played with the word truth. We should ask Our Lord to give us the grace to do what Pilate neglected to do, really to desire to know the truth, to accept the truth when we know it, and to do what truth demands.

That is the problem in the world today, especially in the political realm and in the Novus Ordo, new non-Catholic church. Who is there that really seeks to know the truth and is willing to follow the truth? If they were, they would not be doing what they are doing. How can Benedict XVI come up now and completely contradict what Pope Pius XI wrote with regard to contraception? Now, he has opened the door to all sorts of evil that will surely follow by his recent statements about contraception.

The sentence of acquittal was received with a loud clamor and renewed accusations. Jesus was brought out and the accusations redoubled. Amid all the confusion, Jesus was silent. Then Pilate said to Him: Dost Thou not hear the great testimonies they allege against Thee? Jesus was still silent and the governor wondered exceedingly. This wonder confirmed his opinion of the innocence of Jesus, but the determination of the accusers made Pilate hesitate. His self-seeking began to appear. He did not wish to become unpopular. Pilate saw his duty clearly. He said to Jesus: I have power to release Thee. He knew he had the power. He should have used it.

That is the case in our lives so often. We know what we should do, but we compromise. We imitate Pilate instead of Jesus. We compromise when it comes down to fulfilling our daily duties. We compromise and seek our self-will (pleasure seeking, some honor, and such like things) instead of being willing to stand up for the truth as Jesus did. We imitate Pilate. We compromise, and in the end, slip out from among His great lovers to crucify unto ourselves again the Lord Jesus Christ with a mortal sin.

Pilate indeed should have used the power that he had as the Roman governor. He should have acted as the Proconsul of Gallio acted when St. Paul was brought before him in Corinth. He should have cleared the court and dismissed the case. He should have acted as he himself acted when he said: What I have written, I have written. In like manner, he should have said, what I have judged, I have judged. He just told us what he judged: I find no cause in this Man.

It was the personal interest of Pilate that made him hesitate. His foot was on the ladder of promotion and he did not want his ascent impeded by any report of unpopularity in Judea. As the accusation continued, they said: this Man stirreth up the people, beginning from Galilee to this place. So, the accusers brought up this word, "Galilee," and that word struck a note with Pilate. Jesus was a Galilean. Now, the man of compromise (the man we so often imitate, Pontius Pilate), compromised and saw a way out of his difficulties now. He would send this Prisoner to Herod who ruled in Galilee. How often do we imitate him in compromising, trying to find a way out of neglecting to fulfill the duties of our state of life?

It was Pilate's duty to see that justice was done in the case brought before him. Pilate even wished to avoid condemning this innocent Man, but he also wanted to shirk the duty of liberating Him, so he compromised. Jesus was conducted across the city to the palace of the Maccabees where Herod lived. The judge had compromised. He had taken a middle course. Does that sound like our way of life so often? The Lord Jesus Christ did not compromise! Jesus did not take a middle course. Jesus did not use His divine power to escape from or to diminish His sufferings. Jesus wished to bear them for our sake. Jesus had taken the chalice His Father had given Him and He would drink it to the dregs. All through the morning hours of Good Friday, we have before us the compromise of Pilate and the completeness of the Sacrifice of Himself, which Our Lord made.

Pontius Pilate was greatly relieved now that he had managed to pass on to someone else the final decision of his unpleasant case of the young Prophet of Galilee. Jesus was gone. The governor was satisfied. Yet, he felt he had not acted justly. His conscience was not clear. Pilate was not an absolutely hard-hearted man. In a certain way, he was just, but he was not prepared to suffer for justice's sake. Whereas, we know that blessed are they that suffer for justice's sake for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. Because Pilate was not willing to suffer for justice's sake, the most probable thing is he did not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The vision of this Prisoner, His dignity, His passions, the words He spoke; all these kept coming back to the mind of Pilate. This we can hardly doubt. God's grace was knocking at his heart.

So, I ask again, how often does God's grace knock at our heart, but in vain? How often does our conscience tell us that the things we are about to do should not be done? That we are not standing up for justice? That we are not seeking and loving the truth as we should? We imitate Pilate, unfortunately, and we compromise. We find some excuse in our own mind, at least, to justify our wickedness, our sinfulness. We do not understand the lesson of Calvary.

Somehow, we pray the Rosary and pray the Apostle's Creed, but it does not have the effect that it should have on our souls. It does not bring us to imitate Our Lord, Jesus Christ on Good Friday because we continue to compromise like Pontius Pilate. When we know what is right, we neglect to do it. So, let us reflect on this lesson of Calvary (that Jesus "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried") in such a way that it will change our way of life for the future; that we will now from this day on stand up for the truth.

Pray every day for the grace to know the truth, accept the truth, love the truth, and live according to the truth. Pray that we will not be a self-seeker, we will not be as another Pontius Pilate, who after proclaiming Jesus innocent, repeatedly still preferred Him to Barabbas, preferred Him to justice, and condemned Him to death to satisfy the people because he was a weak man who compromised. It is only by grace that we will overcome and remain in the inner circle of the great lovers of Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother Mary.

We have now begun the holy season of Advent for another year. So, every day during the Advent prayers, we will sing, come O come Emmanuel. Do we really wish Jesus to come into our lives as He should; to follow His inspirations, His lessons, His instructions; to stand up for the truth no matter what it costs and not compromise ever again by committing even a willful venial sin? That is the only way that we are at least semi-secure of never falling into a mortal sin.

Thank you for visiting <http://www.JMJsit.com>. Please tell others about this website and pray much more. Saint Alphonsus Maria (the great Doctor of prayer) reminds us that: "Those who pray will certainly save their souls, and those who do not pray will certainly lose them." Read the sermons and listen to the audio files. "Ignorance is the mother of all evils."