

B326 – De corpore Christi Sermo ii

St. Vincent Ferrer, O.P. – Sermon 2 on Corpus Christi -- 1 Cor 11:24

"Do this in commemoration of me," (1 Cor 11:24)

This passage is found in 1 Cor 11, and is read in the epistle of the present octave. Among all the sacraments of the church, the sacrament of the Eucharist more expressly and properly represents and demonstrates for us the love and charity of Jesus Christ for us, and the passion and death which Christ endured for us. I wish to preach about this. The matter will be devout, but first the Virgin Mary is hailed.

The holy sacrifice of the altar has two conditions or properties. First that it is full truth [veritas plena]. Second that it is a true figure [figura vera]. About the first because Christ fully and really, true God and true man, in soul and glorified body, is in the consecrated host, just as he is in heaven, although by physical eyes he is not seen by us, nevertheless he is there truly according to the prophecy, "Verily you are a hidden God, the God of Israel the savior," (Isa 45:15). And he is speaking about Christ. In this respect we celebrated this feast yesterday.

The second condition or property, that it is a true figure of the passion of Christ, which most appropriately is represented for us in this sacrifice. Because just as Christ was elevated and crucified between two thieves, so the consecrated host is elevated by two hands, the left and the right, which signify the thieves. And just as now the body of Christ was white, drained of blood, so the white host is elevated. Therefore, when it is seen, the Christian should think, "In such a way was my redeemer raised up on the cross." And just as Christ offered his blood to the Father as the price for all believing in and obedient to him, so the priest offers the chalice. See how it is a true figure. Therefore the Collect [Opening Prayer at the Mass] of this feast [reads]: "God, you gave us the Eucharist as the memorial of your suffering and death...etc." Therefore the theme speaks about this sacrament, "Do this in commemoration of me," (1 Cor 11:24).

I find that by divine ordination, so that it be remembered by us, the sacred passion of Christ is represented to our five senses, namely to sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste. The passion of Christ is represented to all parts of understanding, because the Philosopher says, that "Nothing is in the intellect, without first being in the sense." Whatever is in the heart naturally, has to enter through some part of the sense. Therefore in every part he leaves a sign of his passion saying : "Do this in commemoration of me."

SIGHT

First, the passion of Christ is represented to the sight, because the Lord wished that crosses be erected not only in churches or religious places, but in Christian lands also outdoors along the roads. Reason. That when you pass by on the road and you see the cross, you remember the passion of Christ, saying, "O Lord for love of me you were willing to suffer on the cross." Do not think that the crosses are in church or on the road so that you would adore the wood or stone, gold or silver, as the Jews thoughtlessly allege, but so that we may adore Christ crucified whom they commemorate.

For us it is like this story. If a father or brother of someone was impaled on a pitchfork, and then buried. When the brother or son of the one hung up walked by that pitchfork and saw it, he would be completely upset and disturbed in himself, thinking that on this pitchfork my father or brother was impaled. So for us when we see the cross, we should immediately think, that on such a cross the Redeemer, my father and brother, was hung, and we should adore, saying, "We adore you, O Christ, etc."

Isaiah the prophet, five hundred years before Christ, was saying, "All you inhabitants of the world, who dwell on the earth, when the sign shall be lifted up on the mountains, you shall see, and you shall hear the sound of the trumpet," (Isa 18:3). Note "when the sign shall be lifted up," he does not say "which sign." Therefore when he says simply, "sign," par excellence, it is understood of the sign of the cross, just as when we refer to the "Philosopher" absolutely, we understand it to be Aristotle; when we say "Apostle," Paul is understood par excellence. The same in the matter of the sign of the cross. Note "the sound of the trumpet" because when a Christian sees the cross, immediately in his heart these three should sound, "Jesus of Nazareth, Son of the living God, have mercy on me a sinner, etc." Behold the sign for the eyes for seeing, and for remembering the passion of Christ,

Note that for 1,500 years before the passion of Jesus Christ the Jews already were adoring the cross, as is found in Numbers 21. Note the story of the serpents, from the fact that the Jews were murmuring against Moses and Aaron. And God sent serpents, etc. Moses prayed to God for the people "And the Lord said to him: Make brazen serpent, and set it up for a sign: whosoever being struck shall look on it, shall live," said the king that, "Moses therefore made a brazen serpent, and set it up for a sign: which when they that were bitten looked upon it, they were healed." (Num 21:8-9). Behold the first sign. Therefore "Do this," namely, erecting a cross, "in commemoration of me," (1 Cor 11:24)

HEARING

Second, the passion of Christ is represented to hearing, that through the ears the memory of the passion enters the heart. Nothing indeed moves the heart of a creature to devotion and contrition of sins more than the memory of the passion of Christ, nor is there anything that so much inflames the heart for his love and delight.

Note the likeness to this, about those two great friends, very much alike, and it happens that one of them steals something, for which he is arrested and was sentenced to be hung [ad suspendendum]. Knowing this, his friend, out of great love could not to bear that his friend was to be hung. On this account he went to the jail, and dressed up in the clothes of his arrested friend, and returned to his captive friend saying, "Go. I out of love of you will be hung, so that you can escape." And so it happened, the thief escaped, and that friend was hung. Now it is told how much he was bound to love that friend. Now to the extent that whenever it is remembered or spoken about him, immediately he wept out of love.

So properly it is about our Lord Jesus Christ, Indeed he and mankind are two friends, very beloved, to the extent that the love of Christ for mankind exceeds all love. Whence the Apostle, "...for his exceeding charity wherewith he loved us," (Eph 2:4). "For his exceeding." Note the excess of love. Mankind, because of theft, namely that of Adam, had been sentenced to the

hanging of hell. But what did the Son of God do? Surely Jesus Christ, as that faithful friend, came to the prisoner of this world, in the incarnation, and put on the clothing of the robber, humanity, "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God. But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man," (Phil 2:6-7), and gave his clothing to his friend. The clothing of Christ is sonship of God through eternal generation. This clothing of sonship he gave to his friend through rebirth in time, in baptism, "He gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in his name. Who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh," (Jn 1:12-14). And the Son of God was hung for his friend; nor was he known, "For if they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory," (1 Cor 2:8). See what a reason we have for loving Christ. Can we have a greater? Certainly not. Therefore when we hear them speak of him, and of his passion, immediately our heart ought to be moved and inflamed with his devotion, and love, for his service and avoidance of sins, by which he is offended.

Of this the prophet David, "The Lord said: I will turn them from Basan, I will turn them in the depth of the sea. That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thy enemies; the tongue of thy dogs be red with the same," (Ps 67:23-24). Note the secret Basan, according to the Hebrew is the same as confusion. He is in Basan who is in the confusion of sins, because he keeps no order, neither of prayer, nor of confession etc., and like a beast goes about from sin to sin. Of such the Lord says "I will turn them from Basan, "although they be long accustomed to sin, I the Lord will convert them." And how? He responds, "I will turn them in the depth of the sea" of contrition. Because contrition is nothing but the bitter sorrow for sins. For example, When the religious who lives independently [ad libitum] not keeping the rule, etc. And God gives him the grace for contrition saying: "O wretch! What will become of me," etc. Then he is converted from Basan in the depth of the sea. Same for the priest and the laymen and women.

And how does this conversion happen in the depth of the sea? The father says to the son, "That your foot may be dipped in the blood of your enemies," (v.24). The lowest part of the body is the foot, the highest is the head. So also in Christ there are two parts, that is two substances. And the superior part is the divinity, like the head. And the inferior part is the humanity, like the foot. But these two substances alone make up one person. He says therefore "from Basan, converted, in the depth of the sea," And how? That his "foot may be dipped," that is his body, which was dipped in blood, the head through the crown of thorns, the whole body through scourging, his arms and hand by his elevation. Same for the feet.

"And the tongue of thy dogs," Christ is the shepherd, his flocks are Christians. "I am the good shepherd; and I know..." my sheep.(cf. Jn 10:14). A shepherd having sheep needs dogs, otherwise the wolves etc. These dogs are the preachers who bark at the wolves of hell. Therefore the preachers should speak often of Christ's passion. Therefore he says, "And the tongue of your dogs," i.e. of the preachers, preaching about the passion of Christ. So it is that the sinner is converted. Who would be so unfaithful and obstinate that when he hears that Christ so cruelly has suffered for me, that he does not avoid sins, lest he offend Christ? And so from the enemies, that is the demons, the sinner is liberated, not by the preachers, unless instrumentally, but by him, namely we are freed by making peace, by forgiving injuries, by him, Christ, because from his example who was considerate of and prayed for his executioners.

Note here how there is a double remission, one necessary, the other voluntary. It is necessary to remit the hatred of heart and the desire for vengeance. Voluntary, that he seek justice, which justly he is able to accomplish. My heavenly father will hand you over to the torturers (cf Mt 18:34-35), because "If you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offences." (Mt 6:14).

SMELL

Third, the passion of Christ is represented to smell, namely in incensing. Why do you believe that incense is used in church on great feasts, unless to remind us of the passion of Christ? Therefore when you smell that sweet scent of incense, you should think, what the scent and what sweet smelling sacrifice the soul of Christ offered in the passion, which with so great patience it sustained for God the Father and the holy angels in heaven and the holy fathers in limbo.

I find five similarities between the body of Christ and a thurible [the ritual incense burning pot].

- First because the thurible is closed on the bottom but open on the top. So Christ was closed with respect to things earthly and mundane, because he wanted nothing, nor did he carry money. In Mark 11 it is said, "and having viewed all things round about, when now the eventide was come, he went out to Bethany with the twelve." (Mk 11:11), where the Gloss says that he looked about if perchance after he preached, he might be invited by someone to supper, otherwise at dinner time the Apostles would collect grain etc. Same in the late evening if he was not invited by someone to spend the night, he would go out to the desert to sleep, on the ground, because such was his heavenly desire.

- The second is because when the thurible is brought out of the shop it is shiny, but later because of the fumes of its fire it becomes dull. So Christ when he emerges from the shop of the virginal womb – the silversmith who made him was the Holy Spirit – he was beautiful, beyond the children of men. David, "As a bridegroom coming out of his bride chamber," (Ps 18:6). But by the fire of the passion it became stained, when he was wounded with rods [scopis], he seemed a leper, beardless, so that when the Virgin Mary saw him, she didn't recognize him, according to the prophet Isaiah, "And we have seen him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of him. Despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity: and his look was as it were hidden and despised," (Isa 53:2-3).

- Third is because the thurible is perforated; so the body of Christ was entirely perforated in the head by the crown of thorns, in the hands and feet by the nails, in the side by a lance, in the whole body by scourges.

- The fourth is because the thurible is filled with burning charcoal, so the body of Christ [is filled] with the charcoal of that fire about which he said, "I am come to cast fire on the earth; and what will I, but that it be kindled?" (Lk 12:49). Of which charcoal are charity, love, devotion, virtue, and the like.

- Fifth because the incense put in it burns with the such sweetest white smoke, so the body of Christ when that most blessed and purest soul came out of it gave off the sweet odor of obedience to God the Father, to the angels from their reparation, to the holy fathers from their liberation, the human race from the redemption, to the dead by the resurrection of the dead. See why in the churches incense is used, so that even through our noses the memory of the passion of Christ might enter the heart.

About this an authority. The text from Revelation 8, "And another angel came, and stood before the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God from the hand of the angel," (Rev 8:3-4). Note "another angel." Christ was not an angel, but the creator and Lord of angels. But "angel" is the same as "who is sent." And because Christ, as man, was sent by God the Father, therefore he is called "Angel". Just as a friar minor who keeps the life and rule of St. Francis is called "another Francis," and a friar preacher, "another Dominic," so Christ, sent by the father is called "another angel," and he comes, namely into this world and stands before the altar, where he offers sacrifice for our redemption.

There was a cross on the hill of Calvary positioned where he stood, because he was not moved unless the crucifiers said so. When they said to him "Drop [your] clothes," he said, "Gladly," and so for the rest. Having the thurible, namely his holy body golden from valor, i.e. by power, in his hand, because it was in his hand to die or not. "No man takes 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," (Jn 10:18). And he had been given much incense, which were the prayers of the saints, because they all desired his passion. The Angels, that their ruin be repaired. The holy fathers, that they be liberated. "And the smoke of the incense...ascended," (Rev 8:4). This the Apostle says more clearly, "Christ also hath loved us, and hath delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness," (Eph 5:2).

TOUCH

Fourth, the passion of Christ is represented to [the sense of] touch through penitential affliction. The sense of touch gives us knowledge of hot and cold, of soft and hard, and of smooth and rough, which neither by sight, nor hearing nor smell can be known, but only by touch.

- We then perceive the passion of Christ however by the sense of touch when we do penance, then we feel the hardness and harshness of the passion of Christ. When man suffers, he is contrite and weeps for sins, then he perceives the passion of Christ, who when he was in agony, i.e. anxiety, "his sweat became as drops of blood, trickling down upon the ground," (Lk 22:44).

- Second when man after contrition goes to confession, where before the confessor, as if before a judge you accuse yourself saying, "Father, I have done this and this, etc." Then you touch Christ when before the judge he was accused saying: "This charmer did this and this etc. You sense how it is hard to be accused before a judge.

-Third when the confessor according to the quality of the sinner gives you a penance, and you accept the penance, then you touch Christ who accepted his sentence, that he be crucified. He did not appeal. John even says, that he carried the cross himself.

-Fourth, when you punish yourself with disciplines, then you touch Christ who was gravely beaten and, completely bloodied, was led to be crucified.

-Fifth, when you fast, you touch Christ who in his passion fasted, and at the hour of dinner the table was set for him. The table was a stalk of reed, sponge meat, and a drink of vinegar with gall.

-Sixth, when you persevere in a good life and penance, nor give up for any reason, then you touch Christ who chose not to come down from the cross when it was said to him, "If he is the

king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross etc. He saved others; himself he cannot save." (Mt 27:42). Neither out of revenge nor because of derisions did he abandon his prayer. Moreover he continued and said 150 verses. Behold how the passion of Christ is felt by the sense of touch. Mark 6 says, "As many as touched him were made whole," (Mk 6:56).

But some touch Christ in other ways, namely with the sword of the tongue by attacking, by cutting, swearing and denying, blaspheming. These are worse than the Jews who did not break a bone. Such touch is not penitential but criminal. Rulers, be warned, that this vice be corrected. Otherwise behold what God says to rulers, "They that rule over them treat them unjustly, says the Lord, and my name is continually blasphemed all the day long," (Isa 52:5). Therefore don't be surprised if you have troubles.

TASTE

Fifth, the passion of Christ is represented to [the sense of] taste in communion. To this he orders this holy sacrament where those devoutly receiving communion sense the sweetness of its savor on the palate of the soul. Christ in his passion sensed two flavors, namely a sweet taste and other a bitter taste, in diverse respects.

And who can know the bitterness of the passion of Christ? The holy doctors and spiritually St. Thomas says in [III \[q. 46, a. 6\]](#). No pain of martyrs can be compared to his, neither of Lawrence, nor of Vincent etc. Therefore he said, "O all ye who pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow," (Lam 1:12). This sorrow was in the sensuality, in the lower part. But in the higher part, namely in the mind, he had the sweetness of glory, as much as he has now in heaven. So in communion man should perceive these tastes. First the bitterness of the passion. Think that this consecrated host be a silver platter where that lamb, son of that blessed sheep, of the virgin, cooked on the spit [veru] of the cross, between two fires, fear and pain. So the bitterness of the passion of Christ is perceived to the taste of the soul. "For as often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until he come," (1 Cor 11:26).

The taste of sweetness is perceived in communion by thinking about the fruit and graces, which we have from communion. We grow in grace greater through communion, than from any other work, because from good works, although merits are multiplied, nevertheless not from any work whatsoever is grace augmented, just as neither does a child grow from any slice [bolo] of bread. But when man receives communion worthily he always grows in grace. Therefore David said, "O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet," namely to those receiving worthily, "Blessed is the man that hopes in him," (Ps 33:9). See why the theme says, "Do this in commemoration of me," (1 Cor 11:24).