

SACRED HEART OF JESUS
(Friday After The Octave Of Corpus Christi)
(John 19: 31-37)

(Poem Vol. 10, pp. 623,625,626; Gospel Vol. 10, pp. 141-2,144,145)

(At Calvary. Jesus has just died on the Cross)

Joseph and Nicodemus appear from behind the rock. They had certainly taken shelter there, behind the protection of the mountain, to save themselves from the thunderbolts. They go to Longinus. 'We want the Corpse.'

'Only the Proconsul can grant it. Go quick, because I heard that the Judeans want to go to the Praetorium to obtain permission to fracture His legs. I would not like them to disfigure His body.'

'How do you know?'

'A report of the ensign. Go. I will wait.'

The two men rush down the steep road and disappear.

It is at this moment that Longinus approaches John and in a low voice says something to him, which I do not understand. Then he makes a soldier give him a lance. He looks at the women, who are all attending to Mary, Who is slowly recovering Her strength. They have all their backs turned to the cross.

Longinus places himself in front of the Crucified, he ponders carefully how to deal the blow and he strikes it. The lance penetrates deeply from the bottom upwards, from right to left.

John, wavering between the desire to see and the horror of seeing, makes a wry face for a moment.

'It is done, my friend' says Longinus, and he ends: 'Better so. As for a knight. And without fracturing bones... He was really a Just Man!'

A lot of water and just a trickle of blood, already tending to clot, drip from the wound. I said drip. They only come out trickling from the neat cut that remains motionless, whereas, had there been any breathing, it would have opened and closed with the movements of the thorax and abdomen...

[...] 'Dead? Are You dead? Oh!...' Gamaliel raises his terrorised face, he tries to see as far up as the top, in the twilight. He cannot see much, but he can see enough to realise that Jesus is dead. And he sees the compassionate group that is consoling Mary, and John standing on the left side of the cross and weeping, and Longinus, standing straight on the right side, solemn in his respectful posture.

He kneels down, stretches his arms out and weeping says: 'It was You! It was You! We can no longer be forgiven. We have asked Your Blood upon us. And It cries to Heaven, and Heaven curses us... Oh! But You were Mercy!... I say to You, I, the destroyed rabbi of Judah: "Your Blood on us, for pity's sake". Sprinkle us with It! Because only Your Blood can impetrate forgiveness for us...' and he weeps.[...]

Nicodemus and Joseph arrive back running and they say that they have Pilate's permission. But Longinus, who is not too trustful, sends a horse-soldier to the Proconsul to learn what he has to do also with regard to the two robbers. The soldier goes and come back at a gallop with the order to hand over Jesus and break the legs of the other two, by will of the Jews.