

Contemplate My Wounds While Reciting The Chaplet Of Divine Mercy

Praying the Chaplet Opens Us To The Lessons of Christ's Five Wounds

St. Maria Faustina Kowalska recorded in her diary some excellent reasons for us to contemplate our Lord's Passion, and in particular, His wounds.

"Jesus told me that I please Him best by meditating on His sorrowful Passion and by such meditation much light falls upon my soul. He who wants to learn true humility should reflect upon the Passion of Jesus. I get a clear understanding of many things that I could not comprehend before." (Diary, 267)

Jesus also suggested, "When it seems to you that your suffering exceeds your strength, contemplate My wounds." (Diary, 1184)

Centuries after our Merciful Savior accomplished His incomparable sacrifice on the Cross, He seeks to deepen our understanding of what He, personally, suffered for us. He asked us, through St. Faustina, to pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy as an atonement for our sins and the sins of the whole world. (Diary, 848)

Meditation upon His wounds, pleases Jesus, and it benefits us and all humanity as well. Further, His mercy is manifested in these wounds, since He sacrificed Himself for our sins and for those sins committed against us. Indeed, Isaiah (53:5) prophesied: "But He was pierced for our sins, crushed for our iniquity. He bore the punishment that makes us whole, by His wounds we were healed."

The Chaplet can help us to meditate on the wounds of our Lord while we use the five decades of our rosary beads to pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy.

There is no best way to focus on Christ's wounds. The following suggestions are offered to gently deepen our understanding of what is conveyed by each individual wound. When we focus on the symbolism of these wounds, we say the Chaplet with greater fervor. Each wound may have a personal meaning for us. Continued reflection of what Jesus endured can deepen our relationship with our Savior and help us to gain a greater familiarity with His suffering in order that we may continue honoring His great personal sacrifice for us.

Since the wounds from His crown of thorns are so visible, we can begin our meditation on this part of His sacrifice.

The First Decade

We dwell on the multiple wounds caused by the thorns. They were real, not just symbolic. Our attention is drawn to the awareness that Jesus did not save us by His teaching alone. We see how He bore the whips and insults heaped upon Him by the Roman soldiers. He was forced to wear the humiliating crown of thorns that mocked His kingship and authority over us.

Perhaps we can recognize in the soldiers' mockery of Jesus our desire to be our own authority. While contemplating the sacred wounds of our Lord's head, we remain in awe that He accepted the punishment due to our sinful "thought life." His acceptance of each thorn gives us a compelling realization that there are consequences of sins committed in our minds.

In the Gospel of Matthew (15:19), we read: "From the mind stem evil designs – murder, adulterous conduct, fornication, stealing, false witness, blasphemy." All sins first begin in our minds. Our Lord had to make atonement to the Father not only for the sins of the mind, but for our yielding to these sins. Each thorn represents another opportunity for us to be grateful to Jesus for having endured all this for us. (Diary, 741)

By the same token, he suffered the anguish for the sins of those who falsely accuse us of transgressions. These negative judgments must be expiated. Our Lord also loves the very ones who make these accusations and takes upon Himself the sorrow and grief that these sins have caused. He extended forgiveness to them with the expectation that we would find room in our minds and hearts to likewise convey mercy and compassion.

But what if we are not forgiving? What are the consequences of resentment, of our rage and desire for vengeance? Many individuals, weighed down with bitterness and unforgiveness, are drained of life-giving energy. Many are burdened with toxic guilt and have no recourse to alleviate their consciences. Who will atone for all these, if not our Lord? For them, too, Jesus had to endure the crown of thorns. (Diary, 1577)

The Second Decade

During the second decade, we reflect on the wound that pierced His right hand or wrist. We are moved to venerate and acknowledge His pain by seeing ourselves embrace that wound that He endured. In faith, we accept the notion that, out of His love for us, Jesus made reparation for the sins committed by "the right hand," per se – such as when one strikes out at others in rage, steals things, touches someone inappropriately, or violates the sacred personhood of another. Jesus had to suffer as a result of actions such as these. In justice, He was willing to accept the punishment due to these sins.

Similarly, our Lord experienced great sorrow on account of those who, for whatever reason, struck out against us. For many people, extending forgiveness for such offenses can be difficult. Countless individuals carry such memories for years, even lifetimes. Our Lord atoned for these actions and for the lack of forgiveness as well. We just have to accept that gift.

The Third Decade

On the third decade, we follow the same pattern, but reflect on the world in Jesus' left hand or wrist. We again venerate, honor, and embrace that wound that He was willing to accept in atonement to His Father for the violations committed with this hand. This action of Jesus represents His willingness to take upon Himself all the punishment due to our complicity and cavalier attitude toward sin.

The left hand is often considered to be of minor importance in various cultures. For our purpose, it serves as a metaphor for being insensitive to the needs of others who now may have to forgive us. Our indifference to the beggar or the plight of another person also needs atonement. Our sins of omission or insensitive mistreatment of others cry out to Heaven for justice.

Our Lord's sacrifice reveals that there is no trivializing the manner in which He endured the physical anguish caused by a callous attitude toward sin. It was painfully real. The nails did penetrate his hands and feet, blood did flow, and His agony continued unabated. After the Resurrection, He even made all the apostles aware of the wounds in His hands and side and invited Thomas to experience them for himself. (John 20:27) He extends that same invitation to us every time we pray the Chaplet.

We also acknowledge that our Lord endured the suffering due to the sins against those who were abandoned, either in the womb or through someone's unwillingness to care for them.

Jesus accepted the grief of those left behind through cultural differences, lack of proper upbringing, the intolerance of certain religions, and a lack of compassion toward the poor and marginalized.

The Fourth Decade

On the fourth decade, we pause to venerate the wounds in our Lord's feet. We inwardly adored Jesus by becoming evermore grateful that He accepted the penetrating nails in atonement for the sins of the whole world. We sense that He is conveying to us His purpose for accepting this violent action against His Person.

He took upon Himself the punishment of those whose sin consisted in walking away from the Church, the Sacraments, and the teachings of the faith. Many walk away from the influence of the Word of God, which was intended to teach us the right path.

Others have had a negative influence on their families through many generations and have caused the departure of other persons from our faith.

Others have willfully walked away due to pride and subjective determination over their own lives. Many have walked away from their marriage vows and their commitment to their families, especially their children. Who will have to answer for this indifference? Who will answer for the confusion caused by religious who pronounced vows and who have similarly walked away from their commitments?

Due to all these gross violations against the overwhelming love of God the Father, Jesus offered Himself in atonement. When we unite ourselves to our Lord in praying for these souls, we pray with great confidence, since our Lord said: "The prayer most pleasing to Me is prayer for the conversion of sinners." (Diary, 1397).

The Fifth Decade

On the fifth decade, we meditate upon the wound caused by the lance that pierced His side and opened His Sacred Heart. This is the wound from which flowed the Blood and Water after His death. (John 19:34)

Our Lord revealed to St. Catherine of Siena that this wound was to show that His love for us is infinite, and that no amount of suffering could ever express that infinite love for us. He also spoke to St. Faustina of His abandonment at that final moment of His life and asked us to meditate upon that abandonment every day at the 3 o'clock hour. (Diary, 1320).

We again adore, venerate, and honor this awesome wound, a permanent reminder of the unyielding compassion with which Jesus was willing to sacrifice Himself for us. He did this not only in words, but by the sacrifice of His own Body and Blood upon the Cross.

Some people experience such abandonment through a divorce and must live with the unresolved consequences of this action – even though they had prayed many years for a blessed marriage. Some suffer the loss of a spouse through death, and now the void seems intolerable. Some endure a terminal illness, even though many prayers and sacrifices were offered with no apparent healing. Some live alone or in an institution. Some live in prison, whether physically or in their own mind. Some have maintained their integrity in every respect, but have failed in their attempts to overcome a problem or achieve a specific goal and purpose in life.

When our Lord seemingly expressed His dismay and said: "Father, why have You forsaken Me?" (Mark 15:34), could He not be conveying to those who sense a similar hopeless situation: "Do not despair. I know what you are experiencing. I know what it was like. But do not stay with only that one thought. Instead, look to Me. See how I yielded Myself to the Father. Now, you do likewise and pray, 'Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit.'" (Luke 23:46).

The last words of Jesus can bring great consolation and healing – and an ultimate resolution to these kinds of situations, just as it did in His life. The secret to our ultimate healing and union with Jesus is in surrendering as He did.

In focusing upon the wounds of our Lord and what He singularly accomplished for us, we come to the inevitable conclusion that, in faith, we can choose to trust Him because of all He has done to merit our confidence. We join our prayers with a multitude of others and profess:

O Blood and Water which gushed forth from the Heart of Jesus, as a fount of mercy for us, I trust in You!

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Jesus I Trust in You

