

# HOLY THURSDAY 7 Churches Pilgrimage



## What is the Seven Churches Visitation tradition?

**T**he Seven Churches Visitation is a centuries-old tradition, in which the faithful visit seven churches on the evening of Holy Thursday. This pilgrimage likely originated in Rome, where pilgrims would visit the Basilicas as an act of penance and prayer. Saint Philip Neri popularized this practice, gathering people together before dawn to make a visit to all seven of these churches in the same day, stopping at each for a period of prayer and reflection. Over time, the tradition of the Seven Churches Visitation travelled beyond the walls of Rome and is now undertaken by Catholics all over the world. By partaking in this tradition, we keep vigil with Jesus, joining him in his prayers to the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane.

## How do you do it?

The only requirement for the Seven Churches Visitation is to spend time in prayer at and between any seven churches. Many participants pray the Stations of the Cross as they walk between each church. Some recite the Rosary and sing hymns and sacred songs.

The pilgrimage is adapted according to the time, distance, and capacities of the individuals, families or groups who take part in it. This booklet provides just one method of engaging with this practice, offering a Scripture reading on the seven places that Jesus stopped and prayed before his Crucifixion, a reflection and some vocal prayers that can be prayed at each church on your pilgrimage. If it is not possible to visit seven churches, you can “double” your time at churches.

## Holy Thursday plenary indulgence

While the prayer elements of the pilgrimage are decided by the pilgrims themselves, two moments of prayer are highly recommended on Holy Thursday, both granting to those who undertake them the gift of a Plenary Indulgence.

1. The recitation or singing of the “Tantum Ergo” during the solemn reservation of the Blessed Sacrament which follows the Mass of the Lord’s Supper.
2. At least half an hour of adoration of the solemnly reserved Blessed Sacrament.

## Requirements

- One must be in the state of grace at the time one completes the indulgenced work.
- One can gain only one plenary indulgence per day.
- One must have the interior disposition of complete detachment from sin, even venial sin.
- One must have confessed their sins sacramentally, received Holy Communion and prayed for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff, if not on the day that the indulgenced work is performed, then at least 20 days before or after.

# Church no. 1 Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane

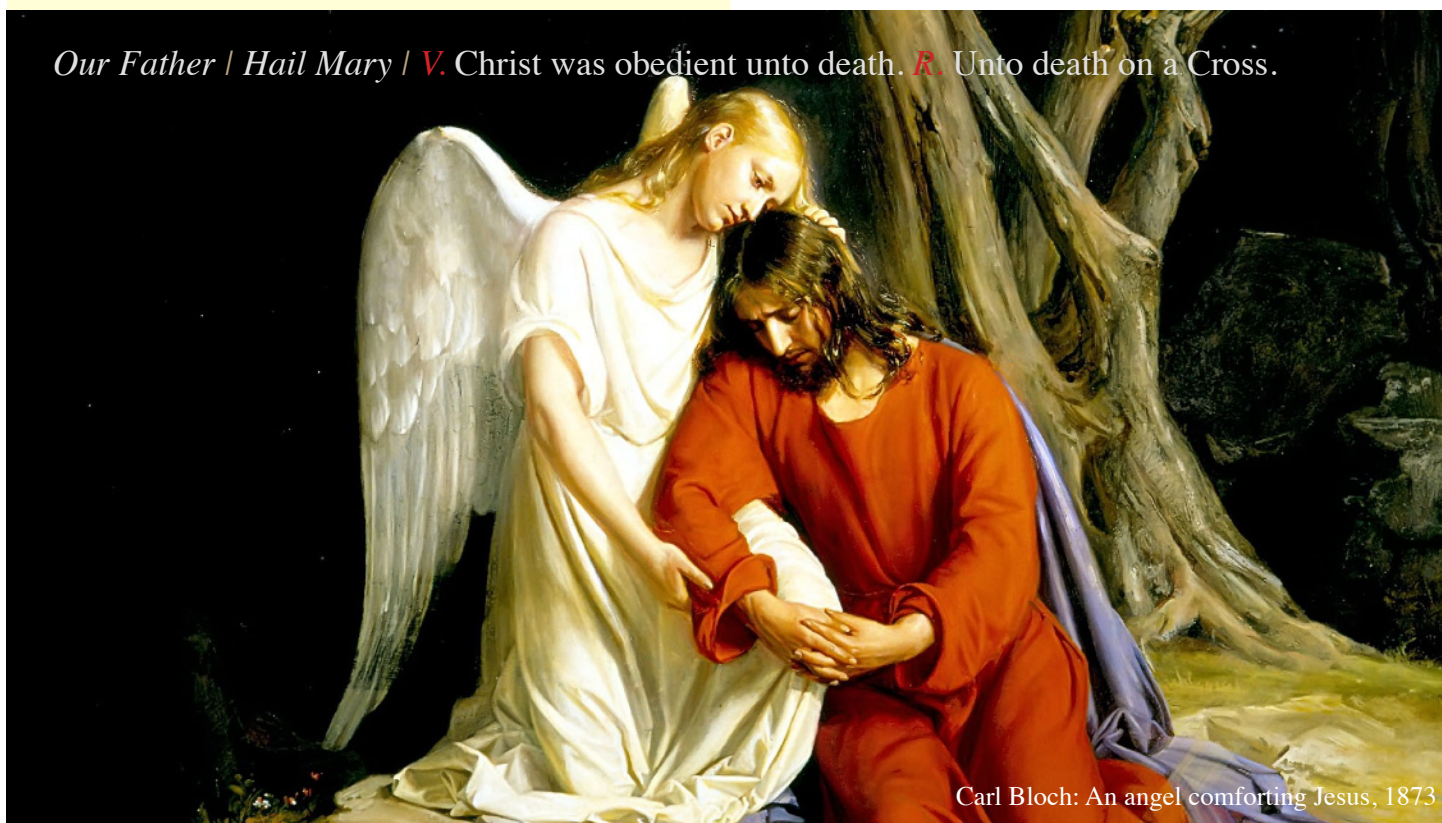
LUKE 22:39-46

**T**hen going out he went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. When he arrived at the place he said to them, “Pray that you may not undergo the test.” After withdrawing about a stone’s throw from them and kneeling, he prayed, saying, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done.” And to strengthen him an angel from heaven appeared to him. He was in such agony and he prayed so fervently that his sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground.] When he rose from prayer and returned to his disciples, he found them sleeping from grief. He said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not undergo the test.”

## Reflection from ST. ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY

God knows what each of us can bear, and when he sees that one of us is strong, he does not hesitate to fulfill his will in us. Would you like to see how he treats those who make the prayer “Thy will be done” from their hearts? Ask his glorious Son, who made this prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. Think with what resolution and fullness of desire he prayed; and consider if the will of God was not perfectly fulfilled in him through the trials, sufferings, insults and persecutions which he gave him, until at last his life ended with death on a cross. When God sees someone who loves him greatly, he knows that such a one can suffer much for him, whereas one who love him little will suffer little. For my own part, I believe that love is the measure of our ability to bear crosses, whether great or small. There is no wood like the wood of the cross for lighting the fire of love in the soul.

*Our Father / Hail Mary / V. Christ was obedient unto death. R. Unto death on a Cross.*



Carl Bloch: An angel comforting Jesus, 1873



# Church no. 2 Jesus is brought before Annas

## JOHN 18:19-22

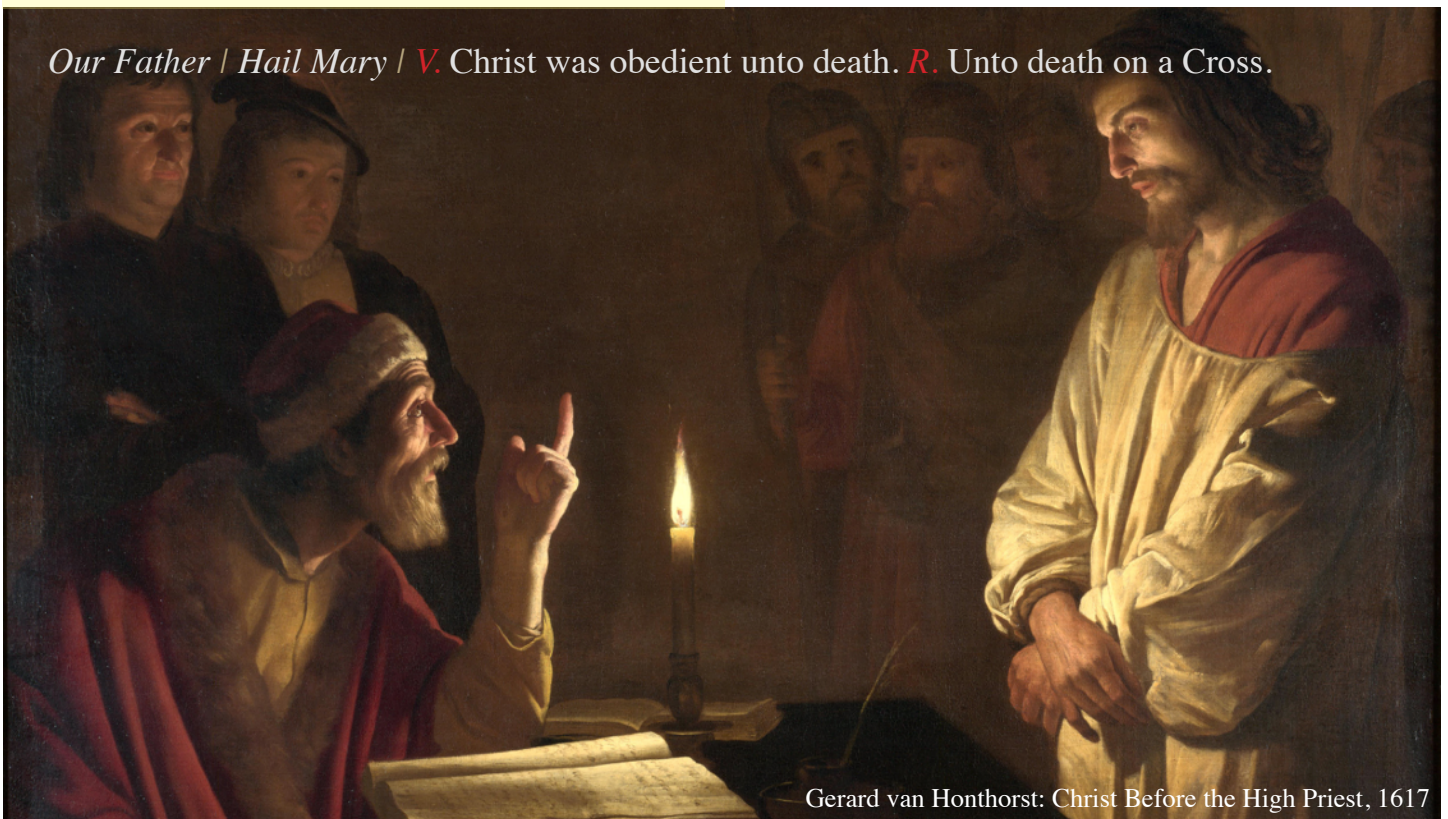
**T**he high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his doctrine. Jesus answered him, "I have spoken publicly to the world. I have always taught in a synagogue or in the temple area where all the Jews gather, and in secret I have said nothing. Why ask me? Ask those who heard me what I said to them. They know what I said." When he had said this, one of the temple guards standing there struck Jesus and said, "Is this the way you answer the high priest?"

## Reflection from ST. AUGUSTINE

Who is Christ if not the Word of God: in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God? This Word of God was made flesh and dwelt among us. He had no power of himself to die for us: he had to take from us our mortal flesh. In other words, he performed the most wonderful exchange with us.

Through us, he died; through him, we shall live. The death of the Lord our God should not be a cause of shame for us; rather, it should be our greatest hope, our greatest glory. In taking upon himself the death that he found in us, he has most faithfully promised to give us life in him, such as we cannot have of ourselves.

*Our Father* / *Hail Mary* / *V.* Christ was obedient unto death. *R.* Unto death on a Cross.



Gerard van Honthorst: Christ Before the High Priest, 1617

# Church no. 3 Jesus is brought Before Caiaphas

## MATTHEW 26:63-65

**B**ut Jesus was silent. Then the high priest said to him, “I order you to tell us under oath before the living God whether you are the Messiah, the Son of God.” Jesus said to him in reply, “You have said so. But I tell you: From now on you will see ‘the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power’ and ‘coming on the clouds of heaven.’” Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has blasphemed! What further need have we of witnesses?”

## Reflection from ST. CATHERINE OF SIENNA

We do not seek joy elsewhere than in Jesus and we avoid any glory which is not that of the Cross. Embrace, then, Jesus crucified, raising to Him the eyes of your desire! Consider His burning love for you, which made Jesus pour out His blood from every part of His body! Embrace Jesus crucified, loving and beloved, and in him you will find true life because He is God made man. Let your heart and your soul burn with the fire of love drawn from Jesus on the Cross! You must, then, become love, looking at God’s love who loved you so much not because He had any obligation towards you but out of pure gift, urged only by His ineffable love. You will have no other desire than to follow Jesus! As if you were drunken with Love, it will no longer matter whether you are alone or in company: do not think about many things, but only about finding Jesus and following Him!

*Our Father | Hail Mary | V Christ was obedient unto death. R. Unto death on a Cross.*



Duccio di Buoninsegna: Christ before Caiaphas, 1308-11



# Church no. 4 Jesus is brought before Pontius Pilate

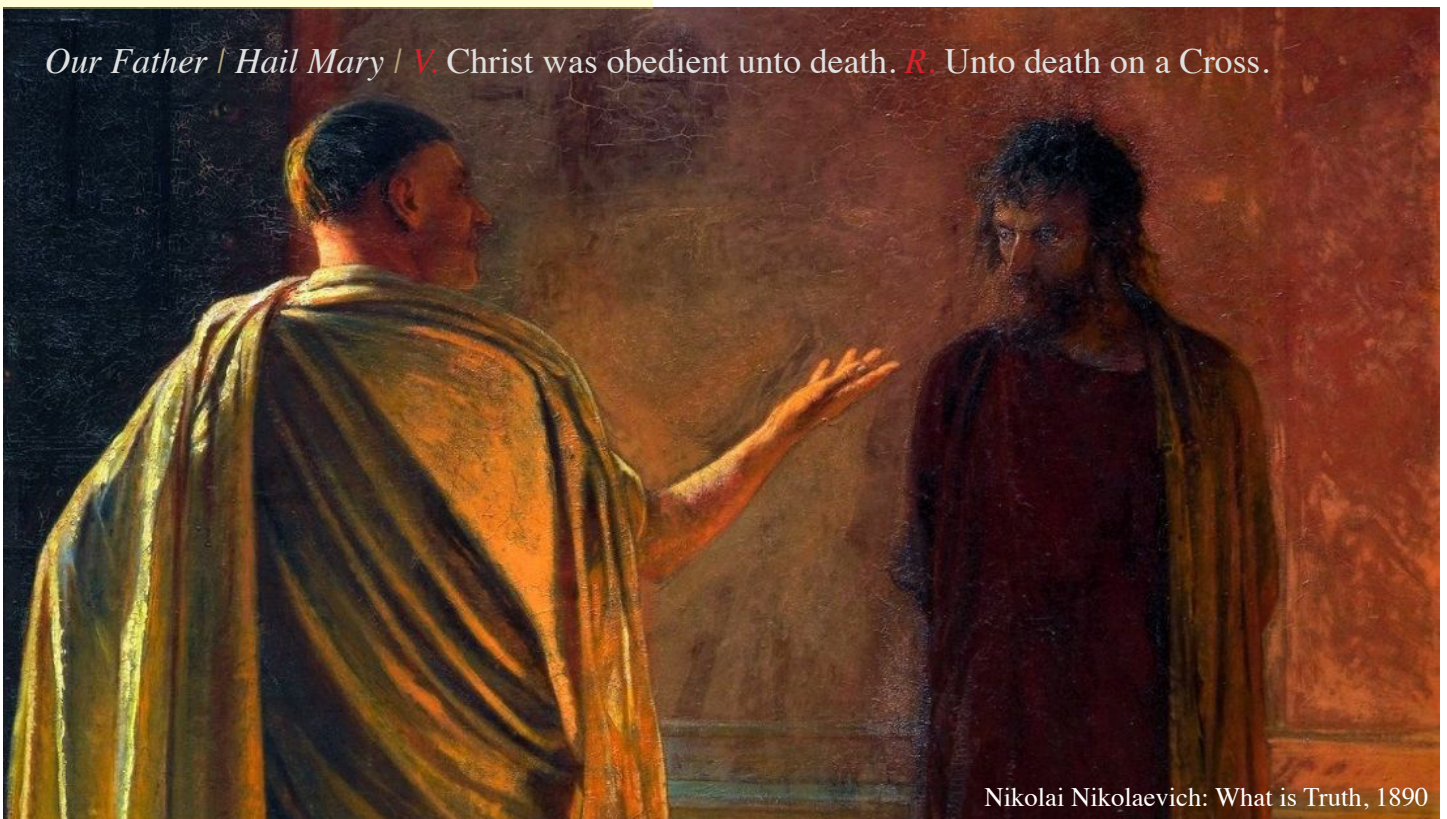
JOHN 18:35-37

**P**ilate answered, “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?” Jesus answered, “My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom did belong to this world, my attendants [would] be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not here.” So Pilate said to him, “Then you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.”

## Reflection from ST. BASIL THE GREAT

To attain holiness, then, we must not only pattern our lives on Christ's by being gentle, humble and patient, we must also imitate him in his death. Taking Christ for his model, Paul said that he wanted to become like him in his death in the hope that he too would be raised from death to life. We imitate Christ's death by being buried with him in baptism. If we ask what this kind of burial means and what benefit we may hope to derive from it, it means first of all making a complete break with our former way of life, and our Lord himself said that this cannot be done unless a man is born again. In other words, we have to begin a new life, and we cannot do so until our previous life has been brought to an end. When runners reach the turning point on a racecourse, they have to pause briefly before they can go back in the opposite direction. So also when we wish to reverse the direction of our lives there must be a pause, or a death, to mark the end of one life and the beginning of another.

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Nikolai Nikolaevich: What is Truth, 1890

# Church no. 5 Jesus is brought before Herod

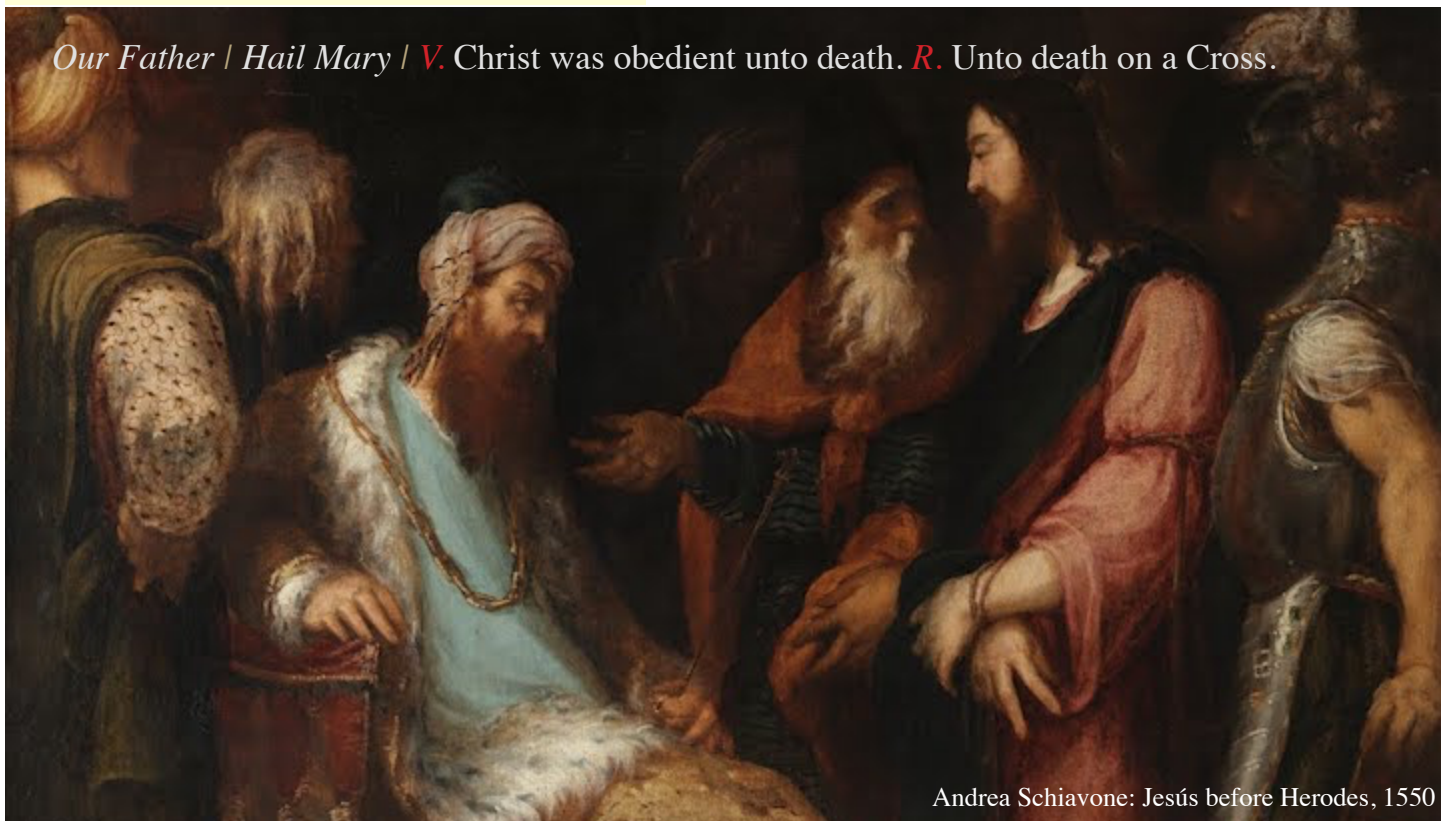
LUKE 23:8-9, 11

**H**erod was very glad to see Jesus; he had been wanting to see him for a long time, for he had heard about him and had been hoping to see him perform some sign. He questioned him at length, but he gave him no answer. [Even] Herod and his soldiers treated him contemptuously and mocked him, and after clothing him in resplendent garb, he sent him back to Pilate.

## Reflection from ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

If you seek the example of love: “Greater love than this no man has, than to lay down his life for his friends.” Such a man was Christ on the cross. And if he gave his life for us, then it should not be difficult to bear whatever hardships arise for his sake. If you seek patience, you will find no better example than the cross... If you seek an example of humility, look upon the crucified one, for God wished to be judged by Pontius Pilate and to die. If you seek an example of obedience, follow him who became obedient to the Father even unto death. For just as by the disobedience of one man, namely, Adam, many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one man, many were made righteous. If you seek an example of despising earthly things, follow him who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Upon the cross he was stripped, mocked, spat upon, struck, crowned with thorns, and given only vinegar and gall to drink.

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Andrea Schiavone: Jesús before Herodes, 1550



# Church no. 6 Jesus is brought before Pilate a second time

## MATTHEW 27:22-26

**P**ilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus called Messiah?” They all said, “Let him be crucified!” But he said, “Why? What evil has he done?” They only shouted the louder, “Let him be crucified!” When Pilate saw that he was not succeeding at all, but that a riot was breaking out instead, he took water and washed his hands in the sight of the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood. Look to it yourselves.” And the whole people said in reply, “His blood be upon us and upon our children.” Then he released Barabbas to them, but after he had Jesus scourged, he handed him over to be crucified.

## Reflection from ST. JOSEMARÍA ESCRIVÁ

And having had Jesus scourged, he hands him over to them to be crucified. Their frenzied and possessed throats fall silent. As if God had already been vanquished. Jesus is all alone. Far off now are the days when the words of the Man-God brought light and hope to men’s hearts, those long processions of sick people whom he healed, the triumphant acclaim of Jerusalem when the Lord arrived, riding on a gentle donkey. If only men had wanted to give a different outlet to God’s love! If only you and I had recognized the day of the Lord!

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Antonio Ciseri: Ecce Homo, 1871



# Church no. 7 Jesus carries his Cross from the Praetorium to Calvary

## MATTHEW 27:27-31

**T**hen the soldiers of the governor took Jesus inside the praetorium and gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped off his clothes and threw a scarlet military cloak about him. Weaving a crown out of thorns, they placed it on his head, and a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They spat upon him and took the reed and kept striking him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the cloak, dressed him in his own clothes, and led him off to crucify him.

## Reflection from ST. JOHN PAUL II

Jesus Christ is “the faithful witness” (Rev 1:5). He is the faithful witness because he reveals the mystery of God and announces his kingdom, which is now present. He is the first Servant of this kingdom. By becoming “obedient unto death, even death on the cross” (Phil 2:8), he will witness to the Father’s power over creation and over the world. And the place for exercising his kingship is the Cross he embraces on Golgotha.

His was a shameful death, but it represents a confirmation of the Gospel proclamation of the kingdom of God. In the eyes of his enemies, that death should have been proof that all he had said and done was false: “He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him” (Mt 27:42). He did not come down from the cross but, like the Good Shepherd, he gave his life for his sheep (cf. Jn 10:11).

*Our Father / Hail Mary / V Christ was obedient unto death. R: Unto death on a Cross.*



Giambattista Tiepolo: Christ on the Road to Calvary, 1737-8