

This Sunday, called Judica from the first word of the Introit, is also called PASSION SUNDAY, because from this day the Church occupies herself exclusively with the contemplation of the passion and death of Christ. The pictures of Christ crucified are covered today in memory of His having hidden Himself from the Jews until His entrance into Jerusalem, no longer showing Himself in public. In the Mass the Glory be to the Father, etc. is omitted, because in the person of Christ the Holy Trinity was dishonored. The psalm (42) "Judica" is not said today, because on this day the high priests held council about our Lord, for which reason the Church in the name of the suffering Saviour uses these words at the Introit: "Judge me, O God, and distinguish my cause from the nation that is not holy: deliver me from the unjust and deceitful man, for Thou art my God and my strength."

In today's Epistle from the Hebrews, St. Paul teaches, that Christ as the true High-priest of the New Testament, through His precious blood on the altar of the cross, has indeed rendered perfect satisfaction for sins, but that the sinner must also do his own part, by cooperating with Christ to make himself less unworthy of participating in His passion and merits, and to appropriate to himself its fruits. This is done when he diligently and devoutly assists at the unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass, by which the fruits of the death on the cross are attributed to us; when, according to the will of the Church, he purifies his conscience by true contrition and confession; and when he seeks by trust in Christ's merits to render some satisfaction for his sins through voluntary penance and faithful following of Christ.

Why did Christ ask the Jews, which of them should convince Him of sin? To show us that he who would teach and punish others, should strive to be irreproachable himself; and to prove that He, being free from sin, was more than mere man, and therefore, the MESSIAH, the Son of God, as He repeatedly told the Jews, especially in this day's gospel, and substantiated by His great and numerous miracles.

Why did He say: He that is of God, heareth the words of God?

To prove that the Jews on account of their stubbornness and unbelief were not the children of God, but of the devil. "Therefore," St. Gregory says, "let every one when he hears the word of God, ask himself, of whom he is. Eternal truth demands that we be desirous of the heavenly fatherland, that we tame the desires of the flesh, be indifferent to the praises of the world, covet not our neighbor's goods, and give alms according to our means. Therefore examine yourself, and if you find in your heart this voice of God, then you will know that you are of God."

When Christ told the Jews the truth, He received insults and calumny; they called Him a Samaritan, that is, an unbeliever, a heretic, one possessed of a devil. This was a terrible slander, and it must have pained Him exceedingly, but at the same time it is a great consolation to those who are innocently calumniated, when they consider that Christ Himself received nothing better. St. Augustine consoles such by saying: "O friend, what is there that can happen to you that your Saviour did not suffer before you? Is it slander? He heard it, when He was called a glutton, a drunkard, a heretic, and a rebel, a companion of sinners, one possessed of a devil; He even heard, when casting out devils, that He did so by Beelzebub, prince of devils." He therefore comforts His apostles, saying: If they have called the good man of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household. Are the pains bitter? There is no pain so bitter that He has not endured it; for what is more painful, and at the same time more ignominious, than the death of the cross? For think, says St. Paul, diligently upon him Who endured such opposition from sinners against Himself: that you be not wearied (by all contempt and calumny), fainting in your minds.