

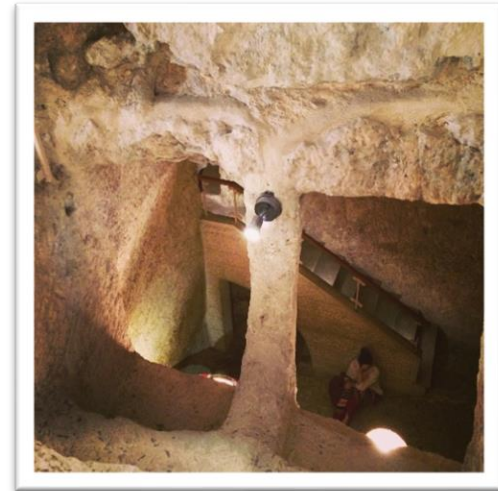
Jesus confined in the subterranean Prison

The Jews, having quite exhausted their barbarity, shut Jesus up in a little vaulted prison, the remains of which subsist to this day. Two of the archers alone remained with him, and they were soon replaced by two others. He was still clothed in the old dirty mantle, and covered with the spittle and other filth which they had thrown over him; for they had not allowed him to put on his own clothes again, but kept his hands tightly bound together.

When our Lord entered this prison, he prayed most fervently that his Heavenly Father would accept all that he had already suffered, and all that he was about to suffer, as an expiatory sacrifice, not only for his executioners, but likewise for all who in future ages might have to suffer torments such as he was about to endure, and be tempted to impatience or anger.

The enemies of our Lord did not allow him a moment's respite, even in this dreary prison, but tied him to a pillar which stood in the centre, and would not allow him to lean upon it, although he was so exhausted from ill treatment, the weight of his chains, and his numerous falls, that he could scarcely support himself on his swollen and torn feet. Never for a moment did they cease insulting him; and when the first set were tired out, others replaced them.

It is quite impossible to describe all that the Holy of Holies suffered from these heartless beings; for the sight affected me so excessively that I became really ill, and I felt as if I could not survive it. We ought, indeed, to be ashamed of that weakness and susceptibility which renders us unable to listen composedly to the descriptions, or speak without repugnance, of those sufferings which our Lord endured so calmly and patiently for our salvation. The horror we feel is as great as that of a murderer who is forced to place his hands upon the wound he himself has inflicted on his victim. Jesus endured all without opening his mouth; and it was man, sinful man, who perpetrated all these outrages against one who was at once their Brother, their Redeemer, and their God. I, too, am a great sinner, and my sins cause



these sufferings. At the day of judgment, when the most hidden things will be manifested, we shall see the share we have had in the torments endured by the Son of God; we shall see how far we have caused them by the sins we so frequently commit, and which are, in fact, a species of consent which we give to, and a participation in, the tortures which were inflicted on Jesus by his cruel enemies. If, alas! we reflected seriously on this, we should repeat with much greater fervour the words which we find so often in prayer books: 'Lord, grant that I may die, rather than ever wilfully offend thee again by sin.'

Jesus continued to pray for his enemies, and they being at last tired out left him in peace for a short time, when he leaned against the pillar to rest, and a bright light shone around him. The day was beginning to dawn,—the day of his Passion, of our Redemption,—and a faint ray penetrating the narrow vent-hole of the prison, fell upon the holy and immaculate Lamb, who had taken upon himself the sins of the world. Jesus turned towards the ray of light, raised his fettered hands, and, in the most touching manner, returned thanks to his Heavenly Father for the dawn of that day, which had been so long desired by the prophets, and for which he himself had so ardently sighed from the moment of his birth on earth, and concerning which he had said to his disciples, 'I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptised, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!' I prayed with him; but I cannot give the words of his prayer, for I was so completely overcome, and touched to hear him return thanks to his Father for the terrible sufferings which he had already endured for me, and for the still greater which he was about to endure. I could only repeat over and over with the greatest fervour, 'Lord, I beseech thee, give me these sufferings: they belong to me: I have deserved them in punishment for my sins.' I was quite overwhelmed with feelings of love and compassion when I looked upon him thus welcoming the first dawn of the great day of his Sacrifice, and that ray of light which penetrated into his prison might, indeed, be compared to the visit of a judge who wishes to be reconciled to a criminal before the sentence of death which he has pronounced upon him is executed. The archers, who were dozing, woke up for a moment, and looked at him with surprise: they said nothing, but appeared to be somewhat astonished and frightened. Our Divine Lord was confined in this prison an hour, or thereabouts. Whilst Jesus was in this dungeon, Judas, who had been wandering up and down the valley of Hinnom like a madman, directed his step towards the house of Caiphas, with the thirty pieces of silver, the reward of his treachery, still hanging to his waist. All was silent

around, and he addressed himself to some of the sentinels, without letting them know who he was, and asked what was going to be done to the Galilean. 'He has been condemned to death, and he will certainly be crucified,' was the reply. Judas walked to and fro, and listened to the different conversations which were held concerning Jesus. Some spoke of the cruel treatment he had received, other of his astonishing patience, while others, again discoursed concerning the solemn trial which was to take place in the morning before the great Council. Whilst the traitor was listening eagerly to the different opinions given, day dawned; the members of the tribunal commenced their preparations, and Judas slunk behind the building that he might not be seen, for like Cain he sought to hide himself from human eyes, and despair was beginning to take possession of his soul. The place in which he took refuge happened to be the very spot where the workmen had been preparing the wood for making the cross of our Lord; all was in readiness, and the men were asleep by its side. Judas was filled with horror at the sight: he shuddered and fled when he beheld the instrument of that cruel death to which for a paltry sum of money he had delivered up his Lord and Master; he ran to and fro in perfect agonies of remorse, and finally hid himself in an adjoining cave, where he determined to await the trial which was to take place in the morning.