

Saint Paul of the Cross

1694-1775

HELL

Saint Paul of the Cross had a vision of the Inferno after the conversion which left him full of fright. But Satan was present in his life, ever since he was favored with the contemplation inspired by the Passion. In his *Diary* he wrote, "... the rest of the day I was buried in desolation, and outwardly troubled by thoughts caused by the demon about future things..." The state of desolation was linked from that moment to external torments from the demon. On the 21st of December he assailed him with impatience, he made him feel disdain towards the priests, and he forced him to flee the church, suggesting to him "very horrible blasphemies." When Saint Paul asked God which humility pleased Him the most, he heard the reply: "That which makes itself be thrown down to even under the feet of the demons."

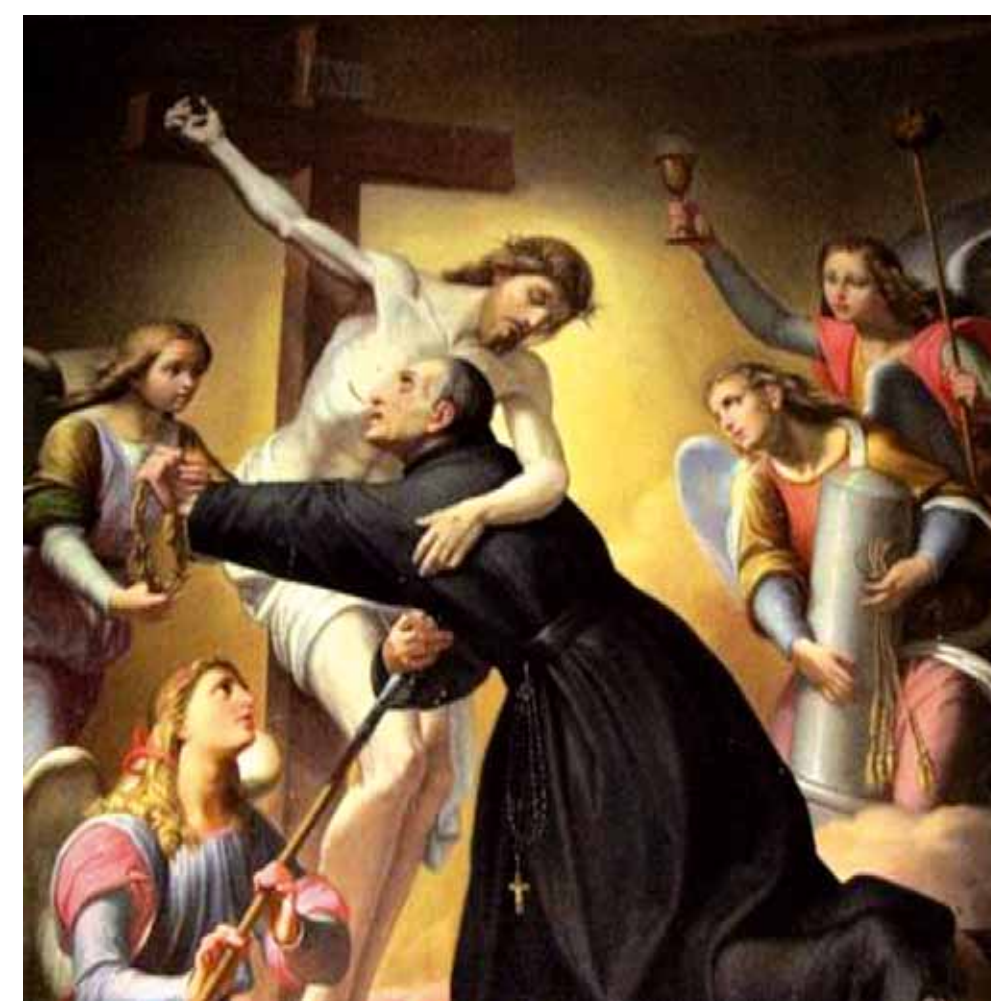
One day the Lord told him clearly about the power he gave to Satan over him: "I want to let you be trampled by the devils." "How much of it was verified - wrote Father John Mary - is not easy to explain. Having the Divine Majesty give permission to the evil spirits to molest him, they made him into a ball (to be kicked, as he would say), for the great rage they had against him and for the

Congregation that he instituted (known today as the Passionists), and for the souls which the evil spirit was losing with the holy missions and much more so for the Most Holy Passion of Jesus which he fervently promoted..."

The persecutions from the demons in the life of Saint John of the Cross are a part of his participation in the redemptive Passion of Christ.

Especially in the "terrible night" the presence of demons and their assaults put to a difficult test the patience of Saint Paul, notably augmenting in him the interior martyrdom. He remained frightened, almost overwhelmed, he spoke of it often as an indomitable fight. He wrote in confidence to M. Crocifissa Costantini (a Benedictine nun), "...The torments increase...because of rage on the part of the demons... I fear to remain under this load..."

He underwent a terrible attack from Hell in July of 1760, when it was by that time close to the establishment of the Passionist Nuns, and the *Rule*, composed by him, was to be examined for approval. In that time, he spent all the nights without sleep, tormented in various ways,



including feeling his head violently knocked against the walls of his room. To the religious, who wondered about the unusual noises, he explained, "Currently, this monastery is causing the devil to burn."

The torments most accused by the Saint were those which increased in him the already distressing desolations. Often, in fact, "they provoked and stirred up so much bile, that he felt annoying even to himself" so much so, that even the sun caused him bitterness. Other times, they assailed him with melancholy and sadness to the point of pushing him to wander about, lost in the woods, or they incited him to throw himself out the window.

