

## Why Did Jesus Have to Die for Our Sins?

If the omnipotent God can do anything, couldn't He have arranged for Christ to have saved the world without suffering and dying? Augustine says: We assert that the way whereby God deigned to deliver us by the man Jesus Christ, Who is mediator between God and man, is both good and befitting the divine dignity; but let us also show that other possible means were not lacking on God's part, to Whose power all things are equally subordinate . . . it was possible for God to deliver mankind otherwise than by the Passion of Christ, because nothing shall be impossible with God (Lk 1: 37) (III, 46,2).

St. Augustine says: There was no other more suitable way of healing our misery than by the Passion of Christ. . . . In the first place, man knows thereby how much God loves him, and is thereby stirred to love Him in return. . . . Secondly, because thereby He set us an example of obedience, humility, constancy, justice, and the other virtues displayed in the Passion. . . . Thirdly, because Christ by His Passion not only delivered man from sin but also merited justifying grace for him and the glory of bliss. . . . Fourthly, because by this man is all the more bound to refrain from sin, according to 1 Corinthians 6: 20: You are bought with a great price: glorify God in your body. Fifthly, because it redounded to man's greater dignity that as man was overcome and deceived by the devil, so also it should be a man that should overthrow the devil. . . (III, 46,3).

The answer to the original question is certainly yes. "Other possible means were not lacking on God's part." One drop of blood—from Christ's circumcision at the age of eight days—would have been sufficient to purchase all mankind's salvation. Why then did He give us twelve quarts instead of one drop? The simple and stunning answer, from Monica Miller's book on the movie "The Passion of the Christ", is: Because He had twelve quarts to give. The strategy of war and of games is to win with the minimum possible expense and sacrifice. Love does not seek the minimum but the maximum. Love seeks what is most "good," "befitting," and "suitable," not just what works most efficiently.

What was added by those twelve quarts of Passion? St. Thomas gives five clear and simple answers. For Love, which motivated the Passion, always seeks what is best for the beloved; and what is best for us is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. Nothing elicits this more than being loved by God with all of His heart, soul, mind and strength. The fact that St. Thomas can find no less than five strong reasons for God's unpredictable and amazing deed shows the profundity and power of divine Providence. There is always more rather than less in the divine strategy.

*By Peter Kreeft*