



Have you ever heard that most uplifting song, sung with that most powerful voice of Michael Ball...

"**LOVE CHANGES EVERYTHING**"? (Charles Hart and Don Black)

Has the Holy Spirit ever sung that song to you, at the most unexpected times, when you sit in Adoration before the Tabernacle, where our Beloved Savior has and will "self-quarantine", for all time, waiting for us to visit Him, the One Who sits in Eternal and Divine Silence, Who waits to share His secrets with us?

*"Love changes everything, how you live and how you die".*

As we behold the Book of the Cross (St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross OCD) and our mind tries to cope with what our eyes are seeing, several thoughts may storm into our hungry soul, and each revelation about the Figure on the Tree pushes our backs against the pew as we understand something of this staggering Love that changes everything in our relationship with our God.

The GREAT EXCHANGE was purchased on the Tree but this story of Love began millennia before in the Garden of Eden.

What happened?

1) We sinned in that first Garden..... CENTURIES PASSED UNTIL CHRIST WAS BORN. HE ALLOWED HIMSELF TO BE FLOGGED IN ORDER TO DRAW INTO HIMSELF THE SCOURGE OF OUR SIN.

Many people have commented that the scourging at the pillar was extreme in the number of strokes inflicted. AN OCEAN OF THE SCOURGE OF SIN NEEDED AN OCEAN OF PHYSICAL SCOURGING.

The GREAT EXCHANGE, punishment for sin, the guilty for the Innocent, was offered to the Father.

The Father accepted the exchange. Debt paid. The consequences of my sins were transferred.



The Great Exchange

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2) We had been made in the likeness of God but suddenly, in the first Garden, after our Fall, fear and anxiety entered our world when we had knowledge of our nakedness...**"I was afraid" (Genesis 3:10). "I ran and hid myself" (Genesis 2:25).** In the Garden of Gethsemane our Savior "being in anguish, prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was **"like drops of blood falling to the ground."** (Luke 22:44)

One of the consequences of our sins is anguish, deep and crippling. This crippling emotion arises from friction between the desires of our disordered fallen nature and our soul. The GREAT EXCHANGE to consume our interior suffering and exchange it for interior freedom was offered to the Father. The Father accepted. Debt paid.

Our deepest anguish was transferred and **"His sweat was like drops of blood."**

3) **"I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid". (Genesis 3:10)**

The glory of the human body, formed and shaped by the Creator, became a source of my shame after my sin of disobedience. So, the Lord Jesus allowed Himself to be stripped naked, pinned on a tree for all to see and He, the embodiment of purity, absorbed my deep shame.

The GREAT EXCHANGE from my shame to purity was offered to the Father. The Father accepted. Debt paid.

My shame was transferred.

4) The tree in the first Garden bore fruit. The tree held fast the "fruit" that tempts the endless disordered desires of my fallen human nature and when I feed my disordered desires, giving them priority before my relationship with God, my soul becomes subject to my desires. Their fruits bring death to my soul.

LOVE was held fast by my sins on the Tree. The Father accepted His Sacrifice. The Fruit of His Sacrifice gives me life.

The GREAT EXCHANGE of His Death for my life was offered to the Father. The Father accepted. DEBT PAID.

His Death exchanged for my life.



## 5) Our Final Exchange...

Many have wondered ...WHY THE CROWN OF THORNS? IF EVERY BRUTAL ACT SPANNING THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN IN GETHSEMANE TO THE PASSION TO THE CROSS, IF THEY ALL HOLD LOVE'S ETERNAL MEANING, WHAT ABOUT THE CROWN OF THORNS? WAS IT JUST THE SOLDIERS PASSING TIME WHILE THEY WAITED TO CRUCIFY THIS WILLING VICTIM?

We return to the beginning of our Love Story. We return to the Garden of Eden.

After our Fall we read... "Cursed is the ground because of you.....it will produce thorns and thistles for you....by the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground....for dust you are and to dust you will return". (Genesis 3:1-19)

Our act of disobedience and sin brought a curse upon us which involved "thorns and thistles". When the Savior was crowned by the soldiers just before His Crucifixion, a ring of THORNS was fashioned into a crown and pushed on to His Head. He would take every consequence of our sins into His Sacred Body and when He was "crowned with thorns" (Matthew 27:29), He was taking yet another curse born from our sins, and THE CURSE WAS TRANSFERRED FROM US TO HIMSELF. It was offered to the Father. The Father accepted. Debt paid.

WE WOULD NO LONGER LIVE OUR LIVES PUSHING BACK THE FORCE OF THE THORNS AND THE THISTLES OF OUR SINS BECAUSE ANOTHER WOULD BEAR OUR BURDEN FOR US BECAUSE HE PURCHASED IT FROM US...

"Take my yoke upon you...and you shall find rest for your souls....for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11: 28-30)

But in this final and devastating event from Eden, there is a final and astonishing and eternal gift hidden and to be found in the words,

"...FOR DUST YOU ARE AND TO DUST YOU WILL RETURN" (Genesis 3:19)

Our Savior hung on the Tree which now gave life, crowned with the final curse of Eden, the thorns, and yes, we will return to dust,

BUT HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION WILL GATHER TOGETHER OUR "DUST" AT THE END OF TIME AND WE WILL LIVE FOR ETERNITY.

SHAME TRANSFERRED, LIFE EXCHANGED FOR DEATH, LOVE CHANGING EVERYTHING AND THAT "LOVE WILL NEVER, NEVER LET US BE THE SAME."

AND LOVE HAS A NAME. "IT IS THE LORD." (John 21: 7)