

Meditations: Good Friday

Reflections for Good Friday. The topics are: Jesus suffered the Passion out of love for us; accompanying Christ in his agony; in the Cross we find our refuge and our salvation.

03/29/2024

“MY GOD, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (*Mt 27:46*). “Jesus experienced total abandonment in a situation he had never before experienced in order to be one with us in everything. He did it for me, for

you, for all of us; he did it to say to us: ‘Do not be afraid, you are not alone. I experienced all your desolation in order to always be close to you.’”^[1] Above all, Christ is afflicted by the suffering that we, the men and women of every age, experience as a result of sin: “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children” (*Lk 23:28*).

No human suffering can make Christ turn away from his determination to save us. “His nailed arms are open to each human being and they invite us to draw near to him, certain that he accepts us and clasps us in an embrace of infinite tenderness.”^[2] The Good Friday liturgy begins with the priest prostrating himself on the ground. This was Jesus’ position in the Garden of Olives. All of mankind’s sins, all human suffering and loneliness – ours too – crushed

him to the ground, and he turned to God the Father for strength.

Jesus came into the world to repair the evil we have inflicted on ourselves and on others. He wants to give us back our freedom and joy. His love for us is boundless, and he assures us: “my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (*Mt 11:30*). Our sins do not need to have the last word if we allow Jesus to speak, if we let him tell us he loves us and does not reproach us for all this suffering. Today we remember that “Jesus has fallen that we might get up again, each and every time.”[3]

ONE OF THE REASONS we sin is that we mistakenly think God’s will is an obstacle to our freedom. This is what happened to Adam, our first father. But God wants us to be happy. He wants us to let ourselves be loved by him. “We are free only if we stand in the truth of our being, if we are

united to God. Then we become truly ‘like God’ – not resisting God, ignoring him, or denying him. In his anguished prayer on the Mount of Olives, Jesus resolved the false opposition between obedience and freedom, and opened the path to freedom. Let us ask the Lord to draw us into this ‘yes’ to God’s will, and thus to make us truly free.”[4]

We are eager to thank our Lord for the sacrifice he willingly accepted in order to free us from death. Jesus is in agony to the point of sweating blood, but his trust in his Father never wavers, and he continues in prayer. “He approaches us, who are asleep. Arise, pray – He says again – lest you enter into temptation (*Lk 22:46*).”[5] Hours later, the fury of all the sins of mankind falls on Jesus’ innocent body. The ingratitude of our hearts wraps our Lord in solitude. “You and I are unable to speak.

Words are not needed. Look at Him, look at Him... slowly.”[6]

“Sometimes it may seem as though God does not react to evil, as if he is silent. And yet, God has spoken, he has replied, and his answer is the Cross of Christ: a word which is love, mercy, forgiveness. It also reveals a judgment, namely that God, in judging us, loves us. Let us remember this: God judges us by loving us. If I embrace his love then I am saved; if I refuse it, then I am condemned, not by him, but my own self, because God never condemns, he only loves and saves.”[7]

OUR LORD’S wounds, through which his most precious blood poured out, are a serene refuge for our own pain and affliction. In Christ’s wounds we are safe. Cleansed by his redeeming Blood, nothing can daunt us. “When we really come to admire and love the most sacred Humanity of Jesus,

we will discover each of his Wounds, one by one ... We will feel the need to enter into each one of his most Holy Wounds: to be purified and strengthened, rejoicing in his redeeming Blood. We will go there like the doves which, in the words of Scripture, find shelter from the storm in the crevices in the rocks. We hide in this refuge to find the intimacy of Christ.”[8]

And in our contemplation we will savor the Church’s strong and tender words today: “Sweet the timber, sweet the iron, sweet the burden that they bear!”[9] It is “the luminous sign of love, of God’s immense love, of something that we could never have asked for, imagined or expected: God bent down over us, he lowered himself, even to the darkest corner of our lives, in order to stretch out his hand and draw us to himself, to bring us all the way to himself.”[10] This is the truth of Good Friday: on

the Cross, Christ, our redeemer, restored our dignity to us. And we want, even more intensely, to nail ourselves willingly to his Cross, to associate ourselves with his redemption and have our wretchedness washed clean by his Blood.

At the end of this time of prayer, we direct our eyes to the foot of the Cross. There we see our sorrowful mother standing, accompanied by a few women and a young man. No other pain can compare to theirs. Christ needed to have his Mother close to him during these moments, and now we need her even more.

[1] Francis, Homily, 5 April 2020.

[2] Benedict XVI, Remarks at the end of the Stations of the Cross, 21 March 2008.

[3] Saint Josemaría, *The Way of the Cross*, 3rd Station.

[4] Benedict XVI, Homily, 5 April 2012.

[5] Saint Josemaría, *Holy Rosary*, no. 6.

[6] Saint Josemaría, *Holy Rosary*, no. 7.

[7] Francis, Remarks at the end of the Stations of the Cross, 29 March 2014.

[8] Saint Josemaría, *Friends of God*, no. 302.

[9] Adoration of the Holy Cross, Hymn *Crux fidelis*.

[10] Benedict XVI, Remarks at the end of the Stations of the Cross, 22 April 2011.

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