

2020 Good Friday

1. There is a saying that at the hour of death our life flashes before our eyes in a moment. On this Good Friday it's good to stand at the foot of the Cross with Mary, facing Jesus directly, standing still, locking our eyes with his and asking him to let us share a little of what passes through his heart – our hearts. **He carries our hearts to Calvary; that is why he is hanging on the Cross today.**

2. As we allow him to open the ear of our heart, we hear a deep sorrow well up in his Divine Heart: "The Lord has laid upon him the iniquity of us all." (Isa 53:6) He is innocent but he is carrying our guilt as if it were his own. In our weakness we hardly acknowledge that the punishment he carries is our own. He has done only good; he is only good. **But our questioning doesn't stop: Why does God allow evil? Why does evil never stop, even after you have been crucified?** Can we remain in the anguish of this question which so many ask? "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Heb 4:15) To recognize him in the sea of human suffering is to understand his heart. It is to plant a seed of beauty in the field of human misery. **Only the Passion of Jesus can lift us out of our deepest sorrows.**

3. We continue to listen and a profound cry gurgles up to his lips: "I thirst." It's easy for us to think of his physical thirst; to think of the wasted blood from the scourging; the dehydration from the heat and the exertion of the ascent. What does he thirst for? **He dies from a thirst of another kind, of trust.** We are quick to accuse others of not trusting, quick to canonize a trust according to our own experiences. But the dark night of trust comes when all hope is lost. The Crucified Jesus gives us hope to trust again; to break the massive yoke of despair that oppresses so many. He takes our

despair before God on our behalf and turns it into mercy. **Today begins the novena of trust in the Divine Mercy.**

4. As we listen to his heart we realize that in the Passion it is not Jesus' past that flashes before his eyes, but our past; the past of each soul he created and came to redeem passes before him. He hears the cry of each soul at the hour of its death. He hears your last cry and mine. **It shouldn't surprise us if in the hours before our death we have strange thoughts like the following,** "I am repelled at the sight of all my sins!" "I cannot forgive myself!" "I feel like Peter, Judas, Barabbas, like the frightened apostles!", "I am so angry with myself!" Nobody can take away our sins, nobody can forgive them save the Crucified Jesus. **This is his free gift on Good Friday.**

5. But then something even more astonishing is also heard. We hear the voice of Christ in the voice of his saints. We hear a young 14 year old Jose Luis cry out to his persecutors during the violent persecution in Mexico in the 1920's. The jailers had stripped the skin from the bottom of his feet and forced him to walk to the cemetery where they would kill him. There they whipped him with branches and thorn bushes to force him to renounce his faith, but **he cried out nonstop, "Long live Christ the King and our Lady of Guadalupe!** They promised him freedom if he would say, "Long live the government!" In response he began to sing, "To Heaven! To Heaven! I want to go to Heaven!" To shut him up one of the soldiers fractured his jaw with the butt of his rifle. As he continued to shout, "Long live Christ the King!" they each began to stab him to death. They taunted him, "Do you want to send a message to your father?" Jose replied, "We will see each other in Heaven." **But when he continued, "Long live Christ the King and our Lady of Guadalupe,** a soldier muttered, "Ah, what a fanatic!" and shot him in the back of his head. (St. Joseph of Clairval Abbey, Letter of Feb 26, 2020, by Dom Barthélémy Marie, OSB)

We hear also the voice of Christ on the mouth of St. Joan of Arc when she was dying: “Hold the Cross high so that I may see it through the flames!” Just before she lost consciousness she cried out, “Jesus!” **Deep within this same divine heart we hear the voice of Christ in our own suffering united to him.** (St. Joseph of Clairval Abbey, Letter of Oct 18, 2014, by Dom Antoine Marie, OSB)

In an even more astounding way we hear the voice of Christ in souls who have consoled him in his own sufferings by the sufferings he willed for them. Such was the life of St. Margaret Mary Alacocue: “As for myself, dear Mother, alas, what can I say, except that it pleases the Lord to keep me in a continual state of suffering, my strength so exhausted that it is with extreme difficulty that I carry my miserable body of sin.”¹

All these thoughts from the heart of Christ are our blessings and graces for our journey home. They are summed up beautifully in our final prayer:

May abundant blessing, O Lord we pray,
descend upon your people,
who have honored the Death of your Son
in the hope of their resurrection:
may pardon come,
comfort be given,
holy faith increase, and everlasting redemption
be made secure.
Through Christ our Lord.

¹ *Life of Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque: Revelations of the Sacred Heart to Blessed Margaret Mary, from the French of Bishop Bougaud* (New York: Benziger, 1890), 278.