



Home in the Word

Way of the Cross

Meditation

We look at the cross of Jesus. Our prayer today is called adoration of the Cross. On the journey across the desert the people sinned against God and were exposed to death by poisonous snakes. When they cried they were saved through looking at the image of snake. Snake was the image of their sin but even more the sign of God's mercy and forgiveness. We adore the Cross so to see our sins and ask for mercy and new life. We pray to Jesus as we look at him on the cross.

Jesus on the Mount of Olives

Jesus is in the presence of his Father. "The hour has come" (John 16,32). Suddenly that hour is the cause of fear. Nothing is hidden from this fear. Jesus dares one last time, to give expres-

sion to the torment that seizes him: “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but yours, be done” (Luke 22,42).

Two wills clash for a moment, and then come together in the abandonment to love already announced by Jesus: “I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father” (John 14,31).

Jesus, you chose to experience temptation and fear: in order to open to all of us the path of Passover.

Teach us to take refuge with you, to repeat your words of abandonment to and acceptance of the Father’s will.

Grant that the world may know through your disciples the power of your limitless love (John 13,1), the love that consists in giving one’s life for one’s friends (John 15,13).

Jesus, betrayed by Judas, is arrested

From the very first time he is named, Judas is indicated as the one “who betrayed him”. How could he arrive at this point, one whom Jesus had chosen to follow him so closely?

It would not take long for Judas to realize his mistake. For it was not the death of the Messiah

that he desired. And then: the futile regret, the refusal of the money of betrayal (Matthew 27,4), the giving in to despair. A mystery of iniquity that escapes us, but that cannot overcome the mystery of mercy.

Jesus, you continue to love those who refuse your love and tirelessly search out those who betray you and abandon you. You bring comfort to those who suffer under the weight of their burdens (Matthew 11,29); and yet your offer of life has often been refused!

But you have never stopped loving them, you would leave all the others to go in search of them, in the hope of bringing them back to you, carrying them on your shoulders (Luke 15,5) or letting them lean on your chest (John 13,25).

We entrust to your infinite mercy your children preyed upon by discouragement and despair. Grant that they might seek refuge with you and “not despair ever of your mercy”

Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin

Jesus is alone before the Sanhedrin. His disciples have fled. Fear has defeated them. Round him now there is only a hostile crowd desiring his death. The high priest invites him to declare whether he is the Son of God or not. Jesus affirms it and thus seals his death sentence.

Jesus, faithful witness (Revelation 1,5). We entrust to your mercy our doubts, our continual wavering between bursts of generosity and moments of lethargy, during which we allow “the cares of the world and the delight in riches” (Matthew 13,22) to smother the spark that your glance or your word has ignited in our hardened hearts.

Encourage those who have begun to follow you, lest they become frightened before the difficulties and sacrifices of which they catch sight.

Remind them that you are meek and humble of heart and that your yoke is easy and your burden light.

Grant that they may experience the rest that only you can offer (Matthew 11,28-30).

Peter denies Jesus

Peter follows Jesus and those who imprisoned him. It is not long before he is recognized. Peter hides in a lie: He denies everything. But a cock crows, the Lord turns, he looks at Peter. Peter understands and bursts out weeping. Bitter tears, but sweetened by the recollection of Jesus' words: “I did not come to judge but to save” (John 12,47).

Now they are repeated by that glance of “mercy and grace,” the same glance of the Father, “slow

to anger and abounding in steadfast love,” who “does not deal with according to our sins, nor requite us according to our iniquities” (Psalm 103,8.10).

Jesus, your turning to look at Peter causes bitter tears of repentance. You are the only hope of those who, weak and injured, fall; you know what is in every person (John 2,25). Help us, in the light of your mercy, to recognize our missteps and, saved by your love, to proclaim the marvels of your grace.

Grant that those who exercise authority over their brothers and sisters may take pride not in having been chosen, but rather in their weakness by reason of which your strength resides in them (2 Corinthians 12,9)

Jesus is judged by Pilate

A man without any guilt whatsoever stands before Pilate. In an unjust world, the just can only be rejected and condemned. Hurray for murder, death to him who gives life. The one who had abandoned himself to the will of the Father is thus abandoned to the will of those who cry out loudest.

Jesus, innocent lamb brought to slaughter (Isaiah 53,7) in order to take away the sin of the world (John 1,29), turn your tender gaze upon

all the innocent who are persecuted, to prisoners who groan in horrifying jails, to victims of love for the oppressed and for justice, to those who see no end to a long punishment that is unwarranted.

Jesus is scourged and crowned with thorns

To the unjust condemnation is added the outrage of the scourging. Jesus' body is disfigured. That body received from the Virgin Mary, which made Jesus the "fairest of the sons of men," which dispensed the anointing of the Word is now cruelly torn by the whip.

Jesus advances resolutely on the path of pain, fulfilling in his own living flesh, the prophecy of Isaiah: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (Isaiah 50,6).

Jesus, reflection of the glory of God and bearer of the very stamp of his nature (Hebrews 1,3), you have accepted being reduced to a broken figure of a man, one condemned to torture, who moves to pity.

You carried our sufferings, you took on our pain, you were crushed for our iniquities (Isaiah 53,5). By your wounds, you healed the wounds of our sins.

Grant that those who are unjustly despised or emarginated, those who have been disfigured by torture or illness, may understand that, with you and like you crucified to the world (Galatians 2,19), they make up what is lacking in your Passion, for the salvation of mankind (Colossians 1,24).

Jesus takes up the cross

The wood of the cross is redeemed by Jesus, it becomes the sign of a life lived and offered out of love for men and women.

According to tradition, Jesus staggers, three times he falls under that weight. Jesus has placed no limit on his love, "having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (John 13,1).

Obedient to the Father's word -- you shall love the Lord you God with all your might (Deuteronomy 6,5) -- he loved God and fulfilled his will to the end.

Jesus, king of glory, crowned with thorns, bowed under the weight of the cross that the hands of men prepared for you, impress upon our hearts the image of your face covered with blood, so that it may remind us that you loved us to the point of giving yourself up for us (Galatians 2,20).

May our gaze never move from the sign of our salvation, raised up on the heart of the world, for, contemplating it and believing in you, we do not become lost, but have eternal life (John 3,14-16).

Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his cross

As they led Jesus away, they seized Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus.

Simon does not choose; he receives an order, and as yet does not realize that he is accepting a gift. The lot of the poor is not being able to choose anything, not even the weight of their own sufferings.

But it is also the lot of the poor to help others who are poor, and there is one poorer than Simon: even his very life is to be taken from him.

The day will come when the poorer one will say to his companion: "Come, blessed of my Father, enter into my joy: I was crushed under the weight of the cross and you raised me up."

Jesus, you walked, resolutely, on the way that leads to Jerusalem (Luke 9,51) your sufferings have made you mankind's guide on the way of salvation (Hebrews 2,10).

Come and help all who, knowingly or obliged by dark events, walk in your footsteps, you who said: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5,4).

Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem

And there followed him a great multitude of the people, His escort, soldiers and some weeping women, women who have come up to the holy city with him and his disciples. They know this man. They have heard his word of life, they love him as teacher and prophet.

The voice of Jesus speaks of judgment, but calls to conversion; announces sufferings, but as a woman’s birth-pains. Green wood will have life again and dry wood will partake of it.

Jesus, King of glory, crowned with thorns, your face covered in blood and spittle, teach us to seek unceasingly your face (Psalm 27,8-9) so that its splendor will enlighten our way (Psalm 89,15); teach us to discover it under the appearance of men marked by sickness, prostrated by discouragement, debased by injustice.

Leave imprinted in our eyes the features of your beloved face; of which the “least of your brothers” (Matthew 25,40) are a bright reflection, a sacrament of your presence among us.

Jesus is crucified

A hill outside the city, an abyss of sorrow and humiliation. Suspended between heaven and earth is a man: nailed to the cross, a torment reserved for those cursed by God and by men. Near him other condemned men who are no longer worthy of the name of man.

And yet Jesus, who feels his spirit abandoning him, does not abandon his fellow men, he stretches out his arms to receive them, he whom no one wishes to receive.

Disfigured by pain, marked by abuse, the face of this man speaks to man of another justice. Defeated, ridiculed, defamed this condemned man gives back dignity to all men: Love can lead to so much, from so much love the ransom of every pain. "Certainly this man was innocent!" (Luke 23,47).

Jesus from among your people, only a little flock, to whom it was the Father's good pleasure to give his Kingdom (Luke 12,32), recognized you as Lord and Savior but your Spirit will soon raise witnesses to this "in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1,8).

Grant to those who proclaim your Word throughout the world glorious boldness (Philip-

pians 1,14) and freedom (Philemon 8), through which your Spirit breaks in with the power of Easter and the language of the cross, a scandal to the eyes of the world, becomes divine wisdom for those who believe (1 Corinthians 1,17ff).

Jesus promises his Kingdom to the good thief

Beside Jesus, who lived among people doing good, two men condemned for doing evil. Two others, one who asked to be at the right side of Jesus and the other at his left, declared that they were ready to undergo the same baptism, and to drink the same cup (Mark 10,38-39). But in this hour they are not here, others have gone before them to the place of the Skull.

One of them appeals to Jesus, to remember him when he enters into his Kingdom. He who shares the insults of the crowd gets no reply, he who recognizes the innocence of a man condemned to death receives an immediate promise of life. Jesus, friend of sinners and tax collectors (Matthew 9,11; 11,19; Luke 15,1-2), you have come to save not the just, but sinners (Matthew 9,13) and wished to give us a proof of your great love (Ephesians 2,4) and of the abundance of your mercy, by accepting to die for us while we were yet sinners (Romans 5,8).

Look upon us with your kindness and after we have tasted the purifying bitterness of humiliation, take us into your arms, strong with fatherly mercy, and transform with your forgiveness the mud of sin into a garment of glory.

Jesus on the cross, his mother and his disciple

Around the cross, cries of hatred, at the foot of the cross, the presence of love. There she is, steadfast, the mother of Jesus. With her, other women, united in love around the dying man. Beside them, the beloved disciple, no one else. Only love has been able to overcome all obstacles, only love has persevered until the end, only love generates love in others. And there, at the foot of the cross, a new community is born, there, in the place of death, emerges a new space of life.

Mary receives the disciple as a son, the beloved disciple receives Mary as a mother. He took into his own home (John 19,27), an inalienable treasure of which he has become the guardian. Only love can guard love, only love is stronger than death (Songs 8,6).

Jesus, beloved Son of the Father, to the sufferings endured on the cross is added the pain of seeing beside you your mother afflicted with

sorrow. We entrust to you the desolation and rebellion of parents bewildered in the face of pain or the death of a child; we entrust to you the dejection of so many orphans, of solitary or abandoned children.

You are present in their sufferings as you were on the cross, near to the Virgin Mary. May the day of meeting come when all tears will be wiped away, and joy will be without end.

Jesus dies on the cross

After the agony in Gethsemane, Jesus, on the cross, is once again face to face with his Father. At the height of indescribable sufferings, Jesus turns to him and prays to him.

His prayer is above all an invocation of mercy for his torturers. Then an application to himself of the prophetic words of the psalm: the sign of a feeling of lacerating abandonment, which reaches at its crucial moment an experience in his whole being of what kind of despair sin leads to in its separation from God.

Jesus has drunk to the dregs the cup of bitterness. But from that abyss of suffering, comes a cry that breaks the desolation: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23,46).

And the feeling of abandonment becomes entrustment into the arms of the Father; the last

breath of the dying man has become a cry of victory, Mankind, which had strayed far away in the vertigo of self-sufficiency, is once again received by the Father.

Jesus, our brother, by your death you have reopened for us the way blocked by the sin of Adam. You have gone before us on the road that leads from death to life (Hebrews 6,20).

You have taken upon yourself the fear and the torments of death, changing radically their meaning: you have turned around the despair that they provoke, changing death into an encounter of love.

Comfort those who today are setting out on your same road.

Reassure those who strive to divert their minds from the thought of death. And when for us that dramatic and blessed hour should come, receive us into your eternal joy, non because of our merits, but in virtue of the marvelous things your grace works in us.

Jesus is placed in the tomb

He who was the light of the world descends into the realm of darkness. The body of Jesus is swallowed up by the earth, and with it all hope is swallowed up. But his descent into the abode of death is not for death but for life.

Jesus lowers himself and reaches the first human couple, Adam and Eve, bowed under the burden of their guilt. Jesus stretches out his hand to them, and their faces light up with the glory of the resurrection. The first Adam and the last are similar and recognize one another; the first finds his likeness in him who was to come one day to free him together with all his other children (Genesis 1,26). That day has finally come.

Now in Jesus, every death, from that moment on, can flow into life.

Jesus, Lord rich in mercy, you were made man so as to become our brother, and by your death conquer death. You descended into Hades so as to free mankind, to make us live again with you, we are risen and called to sit with you in the heavenly places (cf. Ephesians 2,4-6)

Good Shepherd who leads us to restful waters, take us in your hand when we cross the valley of darkness (Psalm 23,2-4), so that we may stay with you and contemplate forever your glory (John 17,24).

Jesus, Wrapped in a shroud and placed in the tomb, you await, after the stone has been rolled over, for the silence of the night to be broken by the jubilee of an everlasting alleluia.