

FAITH AND REASON

Love has the power to transform everything, even pain: Pope Francis' journey/pilgrimage, which began with his participation in the conclusion of the International Eucharistic Congress in Budapest, ended in Slovakia with Mass celebrated before more than 60 million faithful at the national Shrine in Šaštín, dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows. Sorrow, along with its opposite, joy, was indeed one of the recurring themes in the Holy Father's words in his last addresses and homilies. Previously, in Tuesday afternoon's meeting/dialogue with 25,000 joyful young people in the stadium in Košice, in response to a question, the Pope had pronounced a very firm affirmation on the topic: "We cannot embrace the cross all by ourselves; pain, in and of itself, saves no one. It is love that transforms pain.

So let us embrace the cross, always with Jesus and never alone! When we embrace Jesus, joy is reborn. And the joy of Jesus helps us find peace, even in the midst of sorrow". Sometimes sorrow and religion come hand-in-hand; even in regard to Christianity, for which a "sorrowful", semi-masochistic version of religion exists, hinging even on a misinterpreted sense of sacrifice. However, the Pope was crystal clear: pain saves no one. Instead, what saves us is love, this power capable of transforming everything, even pain. The young people who celebrated around the Pope as he visited Košice perceived this miracle, which is the miracle of presence: standing beside those who are suffering, taking care of them, supporting them. It is the promise underlying the entire text of the Bible, beginning with the very name of God, Yahweh, which can be translated as "I am (here)": the promise of a God who promises not magic but presence, who tells Moses and all people who call, "I am here, I will always be here, with you". Up to Jesus who is the Emmanuel: God-with-us, who will be at our side "until the end of times". And he will also be with us in our moment on the cross; in those dark days of the deepest pain and sorrow. Jesus, as the Pope said in his homily for Tuesday morning's Divine Liturgy, chose "to immerse himself in it. That is why he chose the most difficult way possible: the cross. So that no one on earth should ever be so desperate as not to be able to find him, even there, in the midst of anguish, darkness, abandonment, the scandal of his or her own misery and mistakes. There, to the very place we think God cannot be present, there he came.... And now, with him, we are no longer alone, ever". Here then, it is clear that pain in effect saves no one, if lived as an "absolute", that is, alone, but can instead be a redemption, even from the most terrible pain, if we are not alone, if someone is there at our side and allows us to feel loved, not abandoned.

That is what Mary did with her Son and does with all of her children: the Pope recalled this in his homily on Tuesday morning in Šaštín: "Mary, Mother of Sorrows, remains at the foot the cross. She simply stands there. She does not run away, or try to save herself, or find ways to alleviate her grief. Here is the proof of true compassion: to remain standing beneath the cross. To stand there weeping, yet with the faith that knows that, in her Son, God transfigures pain and suffering and triumphs over death". Christianity is not the religion of sorrow but of joy, of victory over death, through faith and compassion. On Tuesday afternoon, during the engaging, touching and entertaining dialogue, the young people, with their "instinct", understood that it represented one of the most intense moments of the pilgrim Francis' journey on Slovakian soil.

Suffering: I want to tell you how I feel about suffering. Maybe you could share this letter with others that are having a hard time. No one likes to suffer, not even Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, but He knew that He had to do it, in order to give us eternal salvation. Suffering unites us to God. Suffering can be offered up for your loved ones to help them on their spiritual journey. Suffering is a gift that brings you close to God. It gives you spiritual eyes to see the face of God in everyone you meet, grace filled moments that you might have missed, and allows other people to help you as they go about their own journey with God. When all is well with us, do we give God the glory for all the blessings He has given us? Sometimes we start praying when things go wrong. Did you ever think that your suffering can get someone else into heaven? God has great plans for us. **A parishioner whose first time with cancer was stage 4 pancreatic cancer and by God's grace she survived. She wrote the following when she found out that she has cancer for the fourth time.**

Prayer to Mary, woman of listening: Mary, woman of listening, open our ears; grant us to know how to listen to the word of your Son Jesus among the thousands of words of this world; grant that we may listen to the reality in which we live, to every person we encounter, especially those who are poor, in need, in hardship. Mary, woman of decision, illuminate our mind and our heart, so that we may obey, unhesitating, the word of your Son Jesus; give us the courage to decide, not to let ourselves be dragged along, letting others direct our life. Mary, woman of action, obtain that our hands and feet move "with haste" toward others, to bring them the charity and love of your Son Jesus, to bring the light of the Gospel to the world, as you did... **Amen.**

In dangers, in doubts, in difficulties, think of Mary, call upon Mary. Let not her name depart from your lips, never suffer it to leave your heart. And that you may obtain the assistance of her prayer, neglect not to walk in her footsteps. With her for guide, you shall never go astray; while invoking her, you shall never lose heart; so long as she is in your mind, you are safe from deception; while she holds your hand, you cannot fall; under her protection you have nothing to fear; if she walks before you, you shall not grow weary; if she shows you favor, you shall reach the goal... **St Bernard of Clairvaux**

Teach Me to Sleep: Lighting flashing, Water splashing, How can you sleep? Thunder roaring, Torrents pouring, Still not a peep. Waves arising, Agonizing, Tossed to and fro. Care uncaring, Hope despairing, Where shall I go? Tempest raging, Fear engaging, Pond'ring the deep. Jumping, sinking, Was I asleep? Heart awaking, Hope partaking, At your command. Waters rending, Love extending Your saving hand. Demons hushing, Stillness rushing Across the sea. Wind obeying Jesus saying: "Have faith in me." Future sailing, Courage failing, In safety keep. Storm winds gusting, Mercy trusting, Teach me to sleep... Fr. **Timothy J. Draper**

A Thought For the Day

Sunday	God will not look you over for medals, degrees or diplomas but for scars.
Monday	In every sick person, there is Christ who is suffering!
Tuesday	Wonder is the beginning of wisdom.
Wednesday	Errors do not cease to be errors simply because they're ratified into law.
Thursday	My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.
Friday	Profound joy of the heart is like a magnet that indicates the path of life.
Saturday	One cannot desire freedom from the Cross when one is especially chosen for the Cross.

A Little Bird; A Victim of Divine Love: How can a soul so imperfect as mine aspire to the plenitude of Love? What is the key of this mystery? O my only Friend, why dost Thou not reserve these infinite longings to lofty souls, to the eagles that soar in the heights? Alas! I am but a poor little unfledged bird. I am not an eagle; I have but the eagle's eyes and heart! Yet, notwithstanding my exceeding littleness, I dare to gaze upon the Divine Sun of Love, and I burn to dart upwards unto Him! I would fly, I would imitate the eagles; but all that I can do is to lift up my little wings—it is beyond my feeble power to soar...

Saint Thérèse Lisieux, also known as "The Little Flower"

Hope for Our Infidelity: Peter's mission will be entrusted to him by the Risen Christ. The encounter takes place on the shore of the Lake of Tiberius. John the evangelist recounts the conversation. There is a very significant play on words. In Greek, the word "fileo" means the love of friendship, tender but not all-encompassing, instead, the word "agapao" means love without reserve, total and unconditional.

Jesus asks Peter the first time: "Simon Do you love me (agapas-me)" with this total and unconditional love (Jn 21). Prior to the experience of betrayal, the Apostle certainly would have said: "I love you" (agapo-oe) unconditionally". Now that he has known the bitter sadness of infidelity, the drama of his own weakness, he says with humility: "Lord you know that I love you (filo-oe)" that is "I love you with my poor human love." Jesus insists: "Simon, do you love with this total love that I want?" And Peter repeats the response of his humble human love: "Kyrie, filo-oe" "Lord, I love you as I am able to love you".

The third time, Jesus only says to Simon: "Fileis-me?" "Do you love me?" Simon understands that this poor love is enough for Jesus, it is the only one of which he is capable, nonetheless, he is grieved that the Lord spoke to him in this way. He thus replies: "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you (fil o-oe). This is to say that Jesus has put himself on the level of Peter, rather than Peter on Jesus level. It is exactly this divine conformity that gives hope to the Disciple, who experienced the pain of infidelity. From here is born the trust that makes him able to follow Christ to the end.... **Pope Benedict XVI**

In His Will is Our Peace
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