

FAITH AND REASON

Every year this liturgy leaves us amazed: we pass from the joy of welcoming Jesus as he enters Jerusalem to the sorrow of watching him condemned to death and then crucified. That sense of interior amazement will remain with us throughout Holy Week. Let us reflect more deeply on it. From the start, Jesus leaves us amazed. His people give him a solemn welcome, yet he enters Jerusalem on a lowly colt. His people expect a powerful liberator at Passover, yet he comes to bring the Passover to fulfillment by sacrificing himself. His people are hoping to triumph over the Romans by the sword, but Jesus comes to celebrate God's triumph through the cross. What happened to those people who in a few days' time went from shouting "Hosanna" to crying out "Crucify him"? What happened? They were following the idea of the Messiah rather than the Messiah. They admired Jesus, but they did not let themselves be amazed by him. Amazement is not the same as admiration. Admiration can be worldly since it follows its own tastes and expectations. Amazement, on the other hand, remains open to others and to the newness they bring. Even today, there are many people who admire Jesus: he said beautiful things; he was filled with love and forgiveness; his example changed history... and so on. They admire him, but their lives are not changed. To admire Jesus is not enough. We have to follow in his footsteps, to let ourselves be challenged by him; to pass from admiration to amazement.

What is most amazing about the Lord and his Passover? It is the fact that he achieves glory through humiliation. He triumphs by accepting suffering and death, things that we, in our quest for admiration and success, would rather avoid. Jesus – as Saint Paul tells us – “emptied himself... he humbled himself” (Phil 2:7.8). This is the amazing thing: to see the Almighty reduced to nothing. To see the Word who knows all things teach us in silence from the height of the cross. To see the king of kings enthroned on a gibbet. Seeing the God of the universe stripped of everything and crowned with thorns instead of glory. To see the One who is goodness personified, insulted, and beaten. Why all this humiliation? Why, Lord, did you wish to endure all this?

Jesus did it for us, to plumb the depths of our human experience, our entire existence, all our evil. To draw near to us and not abandon us in our suffering and our death. To redeem us, to save us. Jesus was lifted high on the cross in order to descend to the abyss of our suffering. He experienced our deepest sorrows: failure, loss of everything, betrayal by a friend, even abandonment by God. By experiencing in the flesh our deepest struggles and conflicts, he redeemed and transformed them. His love draws close to our frailty; it touches the very things of which we are most ashamed. Yet now we know that we are not alone: God is at our side in every affliction, in every fear; no evil, no sin will ever have the final word. God triumphs, but the palm of victory passes through the wood of the cross. For the palm and the cross are inseparable... **Pope Francis**

Contrition is sincere sorrow for sins is basic to our faith and our relationship with God. Let us now consider this disposition of soul in the lives of three women. A woman known to be a sinner in the town, entered the house of Simon the Pharisee. Her tearful gesture of washing the feet of Jesus with her tears and drying them with her hair, must surely rank as one of the most dramatic and moving expression of repentance. The Pharisee was not in the least impressed, in fact he was very critical. Knowing the thoughts of Simon, Jesus told him the parable of the two debtors, who had no means of paying what they owed. The creditor cancelled the debt of both debtors. The question was who loved him most... "The man who had the greater debt cancelled". The point of the parable is that God asks for our Love as the price of forgiveness: the love that weeps for its sins (cf. Luke 7:36). Our love for God will move us to do many things, whatever we do, great or little, it is the love itself that God cherishes and the tears that are its profound expression (Cf Luke 7). This is precisely what the world does not understand. The world adopts a lax attitude towards the sinner: What is done cannot be undone, forget about it and get on with the business of living. Or the world will demand the most unreasonable proof of conversion.

What the world does not really understand is the love that weeps: The love that weeps because it has failed. The love that weeps because it continues to fail even though it never ceases to try. The love that weeps as it struggles to find the strength, the courage, to go on trying. Many people are reduced to tears in this so-called "modern world" because they are given no credit for trying. People so often see only the failure, the fault, and no thought is to the courage and heart that tries so hard and continues to fail.

Jesus visits the home of Martha and Mary after the death of Lazarus. Martha, the woman of action, rushes out to meet Jesus. Mary stays in the house until she is told that Jesus wishes to see her. This is not shyness; it is not a mistaken sense of values. It is the reaction of a contemplative soul, the reaction of a prayerful spirit who is, at all times, content to wait on the Master's bidding.

Mary displayed the same attitude on another occasion when she sat at the feet of Jesus as Martha did all the house work. Martha complained to Jesus. Jesus' response to Martha was one which we should take care to understand correctly: "Martha, Martha, many things trouble you, one thing alone is necessary. Mary has chosen the better part and it shall not be taken from her". That is to say, "Martha, Martha, there is a time and place for everything. Housework is important and necessary. But, I will not always be with you, I am here now". The world does not understand the love that waits any more than it understands the love that weeps. Consequently, a considerable amount of activity is wasted in fussiness and misdirected effort. Initiative, an enterprising spirit, are most valuable and necessary qualities. But without contemplation, without that prayerful spirit, these great qualities can easily become shallow and self-serving and result in our neglecting our relationship with Jesus. This is a common problem in the modern world...**Fr. William C. Mooney**

The Way: Our forefathers in the early Church were referred to "those who followed the way" the way, their attitudes, values, life style were such that they stood "head and shoulders" above contemporaries. Each one of us must meet the Lord, not just in prayer, but in the sacraments and especially in the Holy Eucharist. "I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me. And the life now I live, I live in the faith of the son of Man who gave his life for me. With Christ I am nailed to the Cross". The ancient Catholic spirit proclaims that man is normally i.e., by nature, at the very core of his being, a lover of God. If man will accept the divine challenge to enter within himself, within his memory, in which he is asleep in his history, if he will push aside the accumulated clutter of the years that he values so highly, and come face-to-face with himself, he will realize that in his most secret self-man is a being who remembers God. His life is the fulfillment of that memory. **Fr. William C. Mooney**

A Thought For the Day

Sunday "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." Luke 23:34
Monday "Amen I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." Luke 23:43
Tuesday "He said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother.'" John 19:26-27
Wednesday "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Mark 15:34
Thursday "I thirst." John 19:29
Friday "It is finished." John 19:30
Saturday "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Luke 23:46

The Cross: When some great cause emerges, it inevitably leads to division among people: those who answer and those who refuse to answer, those who accept and those who reject... The presence of Jesus - God incarnate, demands a decision, for or against. The world has always been divided those who accept Jesus and those who reject him. Those who accept Jesus and those who accept him halfheartedly. The Rabbis of old spoke of the divisions that would arise, even in one's own family when the Son of David would come.

Jesus offered them a Cross: People in Galilee knew only too well what a Cross was. When the Roman General Varus crushed the revolt of Judas of Galilee, he crucified 2000 Jews and paced their crosses by the wayside along the roads of Galilee. In those days the condemned man carried the crossbeam of the cross to the place of crucifixion. The people to whom Jesus spoke had seen men staggering under the weight of their crosses and dying in agony that cannot be described.

The temptation to eliminate the Cross is an ancient one: "Come down from that Cross and we will believe." To fear the Cross, to flee from the Cross is human. Even Jesus experienced this temptation in the Garden of Gethsemane. But, at a certain point, all flights are meaningless. Even social involvement, political ardor can become a flight. A flight from responsibility for one's own life before God. When we flee we create an empty house and as the inspired word of God reminds, other spirits will come and live in that empty house. Scientists remind us that "nature abhors a vacuum... it will rush to fill it." Human nature is precisely the same. If good does not fill the vacuum, evil will.

The flight of Christians from their social responsibilities prepared the way for the scourge of Marxist Communism. The flight of Christians from their supernatural destiny makes it possible for false religions to gain a footing from astrology to parapsychology, to oriental doctrines of salvation, to the new age movement that reeks with heresy, falsehood. When people speak of the Cross, they mean a trial, a burden of some kind. The truth in a very limited sense of the word. The Cross is an entire way of life that we are called to live: "He who wishes to be my follow me, must take up his cross and follow me".

Any attempt to understand the life, the person, of Jesus, without the Cross must fail, the very notion is clearly false. Any attempt to understand our "Life in Christ" without the Cross is likewise false. The identity of the individual person in Christ is stated by St. Paul in a compelling way: I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me. And the life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of Man who gave himself up for me. With Christ I am nailed to the Cross". The life of Christ that we share, by God's grace, is not something we have. It is something we are.. It is our very identity. We are people of the Resurrection, precisely we are first of all people of the Cross... **Fr. William C. Mooney**

St. Padre Pio's Prayer to Jesus: O my Jesus, give me Your strength when my weak nature rebels against the distress and suffering of this life of exile, and enable me to accept everything with serenity and peace. With my whole strength I cling to Your merits, Your sufferings, Your expiation, and Your tears, so that I may be able to cooperate with You in the work of salvation. Give me strength to fly from sin, the only cause of Your agony, Your sweat of blood, and Your death. Destroy in me all that displeases You and fill my heart with the fire of Your holy love and all Your sufferings. Clasp me tenderly, firmly, close to You that I may never leave You alone in Your cruel Passion. I ask only for a place of rest in Your Heart. **Amen.**

In His Will is Our Peace

Fr. William C. Mooney

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