

## Good Friday 2018

Holy Rosary Cathedral

30 March 2018

### *Introduction*

Jesus has been laid in the tomb. His last words hanging on the Cross, “It is finished” – “I have completed the mission entrusted to me by my Father” – have been fulfilled. But this Death is not the end. It is “the moment when . . . a flood of love bursts forth to renew all humanity,”<sup>1</sup> when life-giving blood and water poured forth from his side (cf. Jn 19:34) gave birth to his Body, the Church.

Jesus’ Passion and Death on the Cross show us a love that surpasses our merely human understanding. In the Crucified One, the Son of God gives himself up to death in order to raise us up to eternal life. “This is love in its most radical form.”<sup>2</sup> On this Good Friday, and it is truly a “good” Friday, we should receive with profound interior joy this good news of God’s redeeming love for humankind.

On Golgotha, Jesus “loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). In thanksgiving, today, each one of us – without exception – can say: “he loved me and gave himself for me.” When you venerate the

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<sup>1</sup> Angelo Comastri, Meditation on the Twelfth Station of the *Via Crucis* at the Colosseum (Good Friday, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 12.

Cross later in today's Liturgy and look at it afterwards in your home or around your neck or on your Rosary, keep in your heart just these two words: this was "for me."

### *Saints and Sinners*

When Jesus is raised up from the earth to draw us to himself, there is the clamour of the world all about him. The Redemption takes place not in quiet solemnity but right in the centre of the daily life and bustle of the city. In those streets and palaces of Jerusalem, on that hill of Golgotha, and in the gardens of Gethsemane and of the new tomb, a microcosm of humanity shows its different faces.

We have the saints, the holy ones like Mary, the Apostle John, and the women beneath the Cross; and we have the compassionate ones like Nicodemus and Joseph who prepared Jesus for burial. But we also have a cast of sinners – some great and some more ordinary: the chief priests, Pilate the spineless Roman governor, the crowds screaming "Crucify him" ( Jn 19:6), the soldiers taunting and flogging Jesus.

And, of course, there are the Apostles, Judas and Peter, among those chosen to be Jesus' special companions. I would claim that each of these two, in his own way, sheds light on our own friendship with Jesus, with all our struggles, our good deeds and shadows, our joys and sorrows.

So, let's look at them, not as we might from afar and

dispassionately, but from the perspective of what these two disciples say to our hearts on this Good Friday.

### *Judas*

Jesus knew that among his Twelve Apostles one would betray him, Judas (cf. Jn 18:2). He evaluated Jesus using the criteria of power and success. Judas wanted a victorious Messiah who would lead a revolt against the occupying Romans. Jesus had not measured up to these expectations.<sup>3</sup> And so, Judas felt let down. He put his friendship aside and decided to betray him.

Judas' betrayal happened in two stages. First, when he agreed with Jesus' enemies to hand him over for thirty pieces of silver (cf. Mt 26:14-16), he treated Jesus "as though he were an article for sale."<sup>4</sup> Second, Judas fulfilled his treacherous bargain when he kissed his Master in Gethsemane (cf. Mt 26:46-50), so that he could be arrested (cf. Jn 18:12).

The betrayal of Judas is "one of the darkest dramas of human freedom"<sup>5</sup> known to us. Jesus had treated him as a friend and confidant

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Angelus (26 August 2012); cf. General Audience (18 October 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Francis, General Audience (16 April 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Raniero Cantalamessa, Homily, Good Friday (18 April 2014).

(cf. Mt 26:50). However, in his invitation to follow along the way of the beatitudes, the Lord did not force Judas' will. Nor does Jesus protect us from all the temptations of Satan places on our path. God respects human freedom.<sup>6</sup>

“The betrayal of Judas continues throughout history.”<sup>7</sup> Down through the centuries, Judas' betrayal has become a symbol for our countless infidelities, defections from the faith, and pernicious lies that poison human relationships, from the most intimate to those affecting peace in our world.

The question for us, as posed by Pope Francis, is this chilling one: “Am I like Judas, who feigns love and then kisses the Master in order to hand him over, to betray him? Am I a traitor?”<sup>8</sup>

One last word about Judas to remember, for it reminds us that judgment ultimately belongs to God alone, a God who is “rich in mercy” (Eph 2:4):

Jesus never abandoned Judas, and no one knows, after he hung himself from a tree with a rope around his neck, where he ended up: in Satan's hands or in God's hands. Who can

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, General Audience (18 October 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Raniero Cantalamessa, Homily, Good Friday (18 April 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Francis, Homily, Palm Sunday (13 April 2014).

say what transpired in his soul during those final moments? “Friend” was the last word that Jesus addressed to him, and he could not have forgotten it, just as he could not have forgotten Jesus’ gaze.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Peter***

Now let’s turn to Peter, the other Apostle who has much to say to us.

When he was first called, Peter was terrified by the difference between the Lord’s divine power and his own weakness: “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!” (Lk 5:8). It was because of this humility and recognition of his own inadequacy that Jesus called him. But this is a lesson Peter had to learn over and over again during Jesus’ public ministry.

In the Garden of Olives, wanting to show his courage, he wielded his sword against a slave of the high priest (cf. Jn 18:10). Yet, not long after, before the servant girl in the courtyard, he declared that he was not one of Jesus’ disciples (cf. Jn 18:17), and afterwards doubled down on his denial two more times (cf. Jn 18, 25,27). Peter was not even being interrogated by soldiers, the temple guard, or a member of the Sanhedrin. He was asked this question by a slave girl who had no

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<sup>9</sup> Raniero Cantalamessa, Homily, Good Friday (18 April 2014).

authority whatsoever over him. What's the very worst thing she could have done to him? She might have laughed at him!

Peter might have wanted to avoid such ridicule or he might have considered this a little lie which would let him stay close to Jesus who was being tried by the religious authorities. Perhaps he did not fully realize that by lying he was denying his Lord and contradicting the forceful declarations of absolute fidelity he had previously made. As can be the case with all of us, human weakness sometimes takes us by surprise, and we collapse, taking refuge in what we like to call, to salve our conscience, "little white lies."

The heavy curtain of darkness, however, did not fall on this denial, as was the case with Judas. That night a noise pierced the silence of Jerusalem, but above all it pierced Peter's own conscience: the sound of the cock crowing (cf. Jn 18:27). Precisely at that moment Jesus came out of the tribunal, where his honesty had condemned him, and he sees Peter, who lied to save himself from ridicule. There is an exchange of glances between them. Jesus' penetrating stare peers into the depths of Peter's heart, into the depths of his soul.<sup>10</sup> Peter understood the meaning of this gaze and burst out weeping bitter tears.

Now, how do I see myself reflected in Peter's denials? What about

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<sup>10</sup> Gianfranco Ravasi, *Via Crucis* at the Colosseum, Good Friday (6 April 2007).

all those daily petty betrayals which I carry out, protecting myself with cowardly justifications, letting myself be overcome with base fears? Am I too proud, or even ashamed, to confess publicly my faith in Jesus and admit that I belong to him? Or worse, when I stumble and fall down, am I going to throw in the towel and give up on my friendship with the Lord, imagining that forgiveness is only for others and not for me? Or, like Peter, will I repent, trust in Divine Mercy and find pardon and grace?

### ***Conclusion***

Today, then, let us “ask Jesus to look to us, as with kindly eyes he looked to Peter . . . , and to convert us”<sup>11</sup> once again the living God.

Let us enter into the Passion of Jesus from the inside, not merely as onlookers of an earth-shattering event, but as participants and beneficiaries of this supreme proof of God’s love toward sinners who trust in his mercy.

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Homily, Mass of the Lord’s Supper (21 April 2011).