



MEDITATION for Good Friday

Popule meus, quid feci tibi?

My People, what have I done to you? In what have I offended you? As we prepare to adore the blessed wood of the Cross, the words of the *Improperia* or *Reproaches* echo in our hearts. They are words of disconsolate reproach, of the excruciating suffering of the Lord, Who addresses His people and each one of us. The words of a God Who became man in order to save each one of us, dying by the most infamous of tortures, and Who in Gethsemane looks with horror on the multitude of sins of all times, of all men.

Άγιος ο Θεός, άγιος ισχυρός, άγιος αθάνατος ελέησον ημάς. Sanctus Deus, Sanctus Fortis, Sanctus Immortalis, miserere nobis. So cries out the Humanity of Christ to His Father, imploring forgiveness in our name, as the Lord of the human race and as Head of the Mystical Body. As the Lamb of God Who has taken upon Himself the sins of the world. And in that disconsolate cry is contained all the infinite love that is so often unrequited, the ardent Charity outraged by selfishness, and the awareness of our ingratitude in the face of the boundless magnificence of the gifts we have received.

A single drop of the Most Precious Blood of Our Lord would have been enough to redeem

Abp. Viganò on Good Friday: Christ's Passion Manifests God's
Infinite Charity Towards Sinful Man

the entire world: *cujus una stilla* . . . But the Charity of God — the Charity Who **is** God Himself — knows no measure, and reaches the point of giving the life of His Incarnate Son in order to redeem us, the children of wrath. We who have spat a thousand times upon that Blessed Face, struck that Sacred Head crowned with thorns with the reed, lacerated that Most Sacred Flesh with scourges, and driven nails into those Venerable Hands.

Let us gaze upon the lifeless Redeemer, *opprobrium hominum et abjectio plebis* (Ps 21:6). The King of kings raised up on the scaffold reserved for slaves. The most beautiful of the sons of men rendered unrecognizable, stripped of His garments, exposed to derision and insults. And for whose sake? On behalf of arid souls, petrified hearts, and rebellious minds.

And yet, in this sacred representation that involves nature, darkens the sky, and shakes the depths of the earth in witnessing the Death of the Man-God, we are just able to glimpse the abyss of Divine Love of which only a God is capable. The Adversary does not understand Mercy, because he does not understand Love, he is not capable of loving or of choosing to love. He does not understand that the only reason why the Divine Majesty tolerates the presence of sin is that it is an occasion for repentance and conversion, and that it is precisely in the Mercy of a God Who reaches the point of offering Himself to redeem sinful humanity that the perfect coherence of Truth and Charity, of Justice and Mercy, manifests Himself.

In the delirious illusion of defeating God by killing Him on the Cross, Satan has signed his own condemnation. ***O mors, ero mors tua. Morsus tuus ero, inferne*** (1 Cor 15:55; Hos 13:14). *O death, I will be your death; I will be your ruin, O hell! Ut unde mors oriebatur, inde vita quoque resurgeret; et qui in ligno vincebat, in ligno quoque vinceretur*: so that whence death came, there life could be born; and he who conquered by the Cross would also be conquered by the Cross. That instrument of torture and death has become the throne of the Lord of life, on which He reigns. *Regnavit a ligno Deus*. What an unfathomable Mystery! And what an abyss of deaf selfishness, the abyss of Satan, of blind pride, of mute rancor that devours the lost soul of the most luminous angel. The same wretched ὑβρις [hubris], the same delirium of omnipotence that moves the wicked of the earth, the enemies of Christ and His Church, who believe they can overthrow the Lord of hosts and can snatch from Him the souls that His Son has redeemed from them by dying.

Satan's hatred is not infinite, nor is his power infinite, nor is the kingdom of the Prince of this world eternal. But the Charity of God is infinite, His Omnipotence is infinite, and His Kingdom is infinitely eternal. His Mercy is infinite, which burns and consumes every sin and every shortcoming in the fire of Love for us, poor creatures that we are, if only we surrender, recognizing that we are sinners in need of forgiveness and help, so that we may then participate in His eternal beatitude, in His glory. We have been created to love and to

Abp. Viganò on Good Friday: Christ's Passion Manifests God's
Infinite Charity Towards Sinful Man

be loved. To reciprocate with our nothingness all that we have received without merit. To allow ourselves to be loved by God just as we allow ourselves to be warmed and illuminated by the Sun, just as a child allows himself to be embraced and held in his father's strong arms without any fear of being crushed.

Misericordiam volo, et non sacrificium (Mt 9:13), the Lord says to us. Because the Divine Mercy is manifested in the Sacrifice of the Eternal Son of the Father, which we perpetuate in an unbloody form in the Mass; and we ought to correspond to this miracle of Divine Charity by offering what costs us the most — our self-love, our ego, our claim to have merited something when in fact we are indebted for all that we have — showing mercy to our brothers and sisters and doing so in the knowledge that *no one has greater love than he who lays down his life for his friends* (Jn 15:13).

This is the mystery of God: the ardent Charity that envelops and inflames everything. And the *mysterium iniquitatis* consists in the inability to bow down to this love, in the stubbornness of fighting a lost battle, in deluding oneself that evil can conquer the Good, that lies can obscure the Truth, that darkness can overpower the Light, that the creature can overcome the Creator.

Let us prostrate ourselves in adoration before the Cross and repeat those words which we already know, but whose significance we will never fully comprehend: *Adoramus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi: quia per sanctam Crucem tuam redemisti mundum.*

+ Carlo Maria Viganò, Archbishop

April 7, 2023

Feria VI in Parasceve