

**We adore You, Oh Christ, and we praise You
because by Your Holy Cross You have redeemed the world.**

On Good Friday we proclaim the Passion of Christ in the Scripture reading. By the power of the Holy Spirit we are brought into the great mystery of God's love.

Around the Cross of Our Lord, we see three groups that catch our attention: the soldiers, the Pharisees and the Sadducees (each individual filled with unrestrained anger toward Jesus), and thirdly, we also see those filled with love; Mary, John, the holy women.

The gospels were written so that the reader feels a connection with God, the God who loves us making *contact*. God, through today's gospel *contacts* us, in the most graphic form and says: *I love you!* And we are asked to make a response. When someone says to you: "I love you", what should your response be? Should it not be: "I love you, too"?

So, what is our response? How do we respond to this incredible act of absolute love? When you pray using the Gospel, make sure you always pick a person out and put yourself in the place of that person.

The first group - the Roman soldiers. What are they doing during this most incredible act, when God... perfect God and perfect Man (because he is not only a man but a sinless man – perfect) ... Jesus Christ offered Himself in total love to the Heavenly Father for our salvation. *The most important moment of history* and what are they doing? They are throwing dice ... they are gambling; gambling for *Jesus' clothes*. Jesus was dressed in the great white garment of the high priests; a seamless garment that the high priests would wear. Jesus is *vested* as a high priest (oh! if only they could see and know!) He is made to take the Cross. They are gambling, probably telling jokes that ridicule, mock and offend the average person - after all they were soldiers. As they throw their dice and hit Jesus they miss *the greatest act of history*. Through their utter indifference, their complete luke-warmness, having been used to living as creature comfort, they find themselves killing time and at the same time, killing God.

There are thoughts for reflection here. Do we live lives of indifference, for our own advancement, for "me"? Do I love? Today, how did I spend my time? The fact that you are reading this is a good sign that you're not indifferent. There are so many *other things to do*. To play dice with life and lose the love of God ... how we can miss out on opportunities in seeing how *God loves each one of us?*

There is a beautiful story of St. Francis of Assisi. One day, in the great cathedral of Milan that was filled with people, Francis had come to preach. This was in a time where there were no electric lights or microphones. It was getting dark and Francis was late. So what did he do? Francis climbed up on the high altar and there placed a candle by the foot of Jesus on the Cross illuminating His wounded feet, then one by His pierced side (opened for us), one by His hand, nailed to the Cross, then the other, and then by the crown of thorns. St. Francis then walked out of the church. *What else is there to say?*

The second group. Jesus likes the second group better than the first group. Jesus says *I'd rather have you hot or cold, the lukewarm do not commit themselves*. The next group, they are *hot*: The Pharisees and the Sadducees. They curse Jesus; they are angry and full of hatred toward him. Like the bad thief who curses Jesus Christ: *Save yourself. Get down from that Cross. Show us. Do a miracle. Show us you are God. Prove it to me!* And God does not respond. He does not answer. Those who are filled with hatred; they have a much better chance for conversion because at least they're alive and they have passion. It's much better to have passion than to be lukewarm like the soldiers. If you find your heart full of anxiety and

anger at the Lord - then look at His works. Hear the Jesus prayer *for you*, "*Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.*" Jesus want you to receive his forgiveness. Receive His mercy this very day.

The third group: Those that love - Mary, John, the Magdalene. We see Mary, standing close to her son and cannot help but feel her pain. Those of you who are parents; can you imagine watching your child go through similar suffering as his mother did? How could you *not* respond by an act of vengeance? Yet, Mary doesn't turn to hatred; she is full of hope. Hope for Heaven. She *believes* in her God! She *believes* in what Jesus has said. She joins her suffering to His suffering and prays for salvation of those who are killing her Son. Mary looks forward to the Resurrection.

John, the beloved disciple: of all the disciples Joh is the only man to stay faithful to the Lord, and entrusts him with the care of his mother. They loved the Lord. They were united with the Lord. Can we not hear Jesus call us all to come to receive His love? To unite yourself and your sufferings with Him and make yourself live the Cross; to die to self. It is not enough for Jesus to say *I love you*. In return you must say *I love you, too*. And that love means that we are willing to lay our lives down for the Holy Gospel, to lay our lives down *for Him*. Peter ran away. Judas betrayed. Thomas refused to accept his message. The others followed Him from a long way off, but these two, Mary and John, were in love. Tonight, ask St. John... ask Our Lady... that you may have such love for Jesus in your life; that you may not fall like Pilate and Peter, fearing what others thinks, that you will not fall into all the many traps laid out to test us, but that we may be united with Him in the good times and the bad.

If you watch the service on TV you will hear some solemn prayers. In the Holy Liturgy, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we find ourselves at Calvary, not far away from Jesus as He offers Himself to the Father. We, also, are invited to offer to the Heavenly Father, Jesus, our great High Priest. Today we cannot be together and finding ourselves separated as a people. But we are not separated as a Church: the Church kneels at the foot of the Cross. During the solemn prayers close your eyes and imagine yourself kneeling before Jesus - what do you see and what do you feel? Let us offer Jesus at this moment as we pray for the Church - the people of God. We pray for ourselves, our priests, bishops and pope, for all who feed us and teach us, we pray for our leaders and government. We pray for our Christian brothers and sisters, who are separated from us, that we may be reunited again. We pray for those who do not know Christ but love God that they may come to the fullness of faith. We pray for those who do not believe in God at all, that God will touch their hearts. And in those solemn prayers, as we reflect in silence, make sure that you offer Jesus to the Father and, in prayer, speak your intentions that are in the depths of your heart. So what do we come to realise at the end of all this? Hopefully we will have the great manifestation; the revelation of the mystery of the Cross. The Cross will be unveiled and we will worship and adore Jesus Christ, Who has died for us. We invite you all to come. In front of the burning bush Moses removed his shoes because he was on Holy Ground, as God told him. Remove anything dead from your life. Put yourself forward a give a sign of reverence and you approach the Cross. I hope that as you embrace the cross through your veneration, that you will remove any indifference, like the soldiers, that you will remove any anger or guilt, like the Pharisees, and that you will be like Mary and John... who stayed close to Jesus, to embrace him in your lives and love him as he loves you.

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Most Sacred Heart of Jesus – have mercy on us.**