

Holy Week - Tuesday

“There is a Nothingness that is not Lost” by Luigi Giussani (*Avvenire*, May 2000)

“Quos redemisti, tu conserva, Christe”: those whom you redeemed — those whom you willed, designed for you — you save them, you preserve them, Christ. Save them in whatever circumstances you make them endure. [. . .] “Those whom thou hast redeemed, keep them, Christ.” Those you have called. Each one of us has been called, touched by the finger of the Lord, invested with the flame of the heart.

The answer to this election is all in the prayer of which we are capable. Our answer is a prayer, it is not a special ability; it is just the impetus of prayer. I believe that for centuries, the Christian people have been especially blessed and confirmed in striving towards salvation by one thing: the Holy Rosary. [. . .] Using the Holy Rosary: meditating on what it imposes on us, the Mystery revealed in it is the assurance of what the mother of Jesus can do for our lives, does for our lives. Jesus did not come for us to waste time.

The sorrowful mysteries are the condition — which, humanly speaking are absurd (but sorrow is an unavoidable condition, and in my condition as an old man I understand these things as I never did before) — of being part of Jesus, of belonging to Him.

Whatever our state of mind, every day let us ask Our Lady for the grace that what Christ promised in her being our mother, which is expressed in the truth of our vocation, will come true concretely by making us change. Let each of us, therefore, in looking at other people — in looking at each other, in short — weep for joy before the evidence that the Blessed Virgin, as the emergence of a redemptive newness, will, in her son, totally save the existence to which we have been called. There is a nothingness, a piece of nothingness that is not lost. Something that is nothing could very well be lost, but no! It is saved!

“Quos redemisti, tu conserva, Christe,” preserve us, Lord, in the salvation for which you have deigned to enter our lives. This is the supreme reason for joy, yes, for security and joy, and therefore for glory. Glory is our joy. Joy is the security that happens in the world by the fact that we have been touched by the Mystery, in the possession of Christ.

The Sorrowful Mysteries: Meditations by Luigi Giussani

The Virgin felt that the creature she was carrying in her womb would have, one day, to die (every mother feels this, even as she tries not to think about it); but she did not feel that He would rise again. This is the event which is uniquely comparable to the mystery of the beginning. Just as the seed took shape within her womb, so, in the fullness of time, He would rise again; that Man would rise again. But she didn't know this. "Let it be done unto me according to Your word," on the Virgin's lips, is the same as, "Lord, Your will be done," on the lips of Christ. The correspondence between the Angelus and the Cross lies in the fact that both say, "Let it be done unto me according to Your word." This is the gesture of obedience in its pure essentiality. Its pure essentiality causes you to be torn by something that God asks of you in order to then pass through a cross and resurrection from which a limitless fecundity springs forth, a fecundity whose only limit is the limit of God's plan. Fecundity springs forth from virginity. Virginity can be conceived of only this way.

1. Jesus' Agony in the Garden

"Now my soul is sorrowful; and what must I say? 'Father, save me from this hour [faced with the thought of sacrifice, the thought of death, of self-denial...]'? But it is for this that I have come to this hour [for this, for this condition have I been chosen, called, lovingly taught by the mystery of the Father, by the charity of the Son, by the warm light of the Spirit. Now my soul is sorrowful and what must I say, 'Father, save me from this hour'? 'Take away this condition, Father, take away this condition.' Must I say this? But it is precisely for this that I have come to this hour!]." Thus I can say at the end, "Father, glorify Your name [glorify Your will, bring about, realize Your plan], which I do not comprehend [because He did not comprehend the great injustice]. Father, glorify Your name in front of which I stand in fear and trembling, in obedience – that is to say, in love. My life is Your plan, it is Your will."

How many times – praying to the Spirit and the Virgin Mary – will we have to reread this passage in order to identify with the most lucid and fascinating instant in which the consciousness of the Man Christ, Jesus, expressed itself. We can marvel at it, from its deepest recesses to the highest peaks of His example of love for Being, of respect for the objectivity of Being, of love for His origin and His destiny, and for the contents of the plan of time, of history. "Father, if possible, let me not die; however, not my but Your will be done." This is the supreme application of our acknowledgment of the Mystery, adhering to the Man-Christ kneeling and sweating blood from the pores of His skin in His agony in Gethsemane; the condition for being true in a relationship is sacrifice.

2. The Scourging of Jesus at the Pillar

The companionship of the God-Man with our lives has become an inconceivable, unimaginable tragedy – one that defies the imagination. In all the centuries of history, it is impossible to imagine – even in our wildest imagination, like in a fairy tale – a tragedy greater than this: the companionship of God-made-flesh was forgotten by man, who was affronted by it. This is a tragedy that arises from our cynically pursuing of our instincts. The evil of man who fails the call of the Infinite and the disasters that result of this crime all coalesce around this wood, so that the death of the God-Man is the sum and symbol of all these disasters. And, at the same time, the irresistible power of God is also encountered here, because that very supreme disaster and that very evil become the instruments for their conquest and redemption. This is the enigma that God maintains in life; because this great plan of goodness, wisdom, knowledge, and love must be a trial, must actualize the idea of “trial”. Why a trial? Because the world is in evil, the world lies in the Evil One.

3. Jesus Crowned with Thorns

That little head that Our Lady, like every mother with her newborn child, would have enfolded close to her without squeezing it, and would have caressed delicately as every mother does, and would have looked at in wonder and admiration – that head would one day be crowned with thorns. *Salve caput cruentatum*. How the Virgin felt echoing within her this evil of the world, without details and without accusations, but as an already boundless grief that would culminate in watching her Son die!

4. Jesus on the Way to Calvary

God who came among us goes to the scaffold defeated, a failure; then there is a moment, a day, three days of nothingness, in which everything is finished. This is the condition, the condition of sacrifice in its most profound sense: it appears to be a failure, it appears not to succeed, it appears that the others are right. Remaining with Him even when it seems that everything is finished or has finished, staying next to Him as His Mother did – only this faithfulness brings us, sooner or later, to the experience that no one outside the Christian community can have in this world: the experience of the Resurrection.

And we can leave for another love this Christ who goes to die in order to deliver us from evil so that we may change, so that the Eternal Father may regenerate in us what the crime of forgetfulness has superseded! This man throws himself onto the cross to brandish it, to embrace it, to be nailed to it, to die, to be one with that wood: “shall we leave him for another love?” This Man pours out his blood for us, and shall we leave him for another love?

5. Jesus Dies on the Cross

We are sinners, and Christ's death saves us. Christ's death turns any past of ours into good; but our past is full of darkness that is called sin. And it is Christ's death that saves us. We cannot acknowledge Christ on the cross without immediately understanding and feeling that this cross must touch us, that we can no longer object to sacrifice; there has no longer been room for objection to sacrifice since the moment Christ died.

It is precisely through our gaze fixed on the cross – on which hangs the One who looks at us with the fixed gaze of eternity, full of pity and the will to save us, having pity on us and our nothingness – through our gaze fixed on the cross, what would be something so foreign as to seem to us abstract, arbitrarily created, becomes the experience of redemption. It is by fixing our gaze on the cross that we learn to perceive experientially the invading Presence and the unavoidable need for grace that gives our life perfection, and gives it joy. It is in Mary that the adoration of our heart finds its example and its form. For the condition of the cross was not just for Christ; Christ's death on the cross saves the world, but not in isolation. It is not alone that Christ saves the world, but by the adherence of each and every one of us to suffering and the cross. St. Paul says: "In my own body I make up all the hardships that still have to be undergone by Christ, in His Cross and Passion."

With you, o Mary, we recognize that the renouncement that is asked of our life is not a punishment, but the condition for its salvation, for its exaltation, for its increase. Mary, make our offering, the offering of our lives, help the poor world, this poor world, to be enriched in the knowledge of Christ and to rejoice in Christ's love.