

LOVE STRONGER THAN DEATH

This is what makes Christian worship unique: it is a space where not only thanksgiving and praise are welcome, but also disappointment, bitterness, anger and even despair. We do not need to be afraid because of the shocking character of Jesus' cry of desolation on the cross. It is the Son who says to the Father: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" The Son of God came to teach us how to worship the Father in spirit and truth. Now, at this crucial juncture of his life and of his mission, the example he leaves to us is not a stoic acceptance of the will of the Father, but a protestation. If the Lord embraces humiliation and agony to the point of needing to scream, we have the duty to take them seriously. The life of faith does not spare us depression, loneliness and anguish. It requires from us that we do not ignore or downplay them, but rather that we boldly shout them out to the Father, just as Jesus did. Jesus did not try to hide this moment of darkness from himself, from the Father and from us. On the contrary, he exposed it so that everyone could see it, he screamed it so that everyone could hear it. Only in this way could he persuade us that even our despair can become prayer. Clinging to the Lord, keep repeating, "my God, my God": this is the expression of a love stronger than death, this is the worship in spirit and truth that the Father seeks.

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Mass text

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel. Hosanna in the highest.

As the Lord entered the holy city, the children of the Hebrews proclaimed the resurrection of life. Waving their branches of palm, they cried: Hosanna in the Highest.

When the people heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, they went out to meet him. Waving their branches.

FIRST READING Isaiah 50:4-7

PSALM Psalm 21

RESPONSE **My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**

- All who see me deride me. They curl their lips, they toss their heads. "He trusted in the Lord, let him save him; let him release him if this is his friend." **R.**
- Many dogs have surrounded me, a band of the wicked beset me. They tear holes in my hands and my feet. I can count every one of my bones. **R.**

- They divide my clothing among them. They cast lots for my robe. O Lord, do not leave me alone, my strength, make haste to help me! **R.**
- I will tell of your name to my brethren and praise you where they are assembled. "You who fear the Lord give him praise; all sons of Jacob, give him glory. Revere him, Israel's sons." **R.**

SECOND READING Philippians 2:6-11

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory: Christ was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. But God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all names. Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory.

GOSPEL Matthew 26:14 – 27:66

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Father, if this chalice cannot pass without my drinking it, your will be done.

Next Sunday's Readings:

Acts 10:34. 37-43
Colossians 3:1-4 or 1 Corinthians 5:6-8
John 20:1-9



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PRAYING DISTRESS



Our worship is authentic when every aspect of our lives becomes prayer, even our distress, even our despair. True, inner affliction is what biblical authors fear even more than physical suffering and the trials of life. This dread is constantly voiced in sentences of this kind: "Why, O Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?" (Psalm 10:1); "I say to God, my rock, 'Why have you forgotten me? Why must I walk about mournfully because the enemy oppresses me?'" (Psalm 42:9). The speaker of these words is confused and ashamed, unable to understand the way God is acting in history: "When I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task" (Psalm 73:16).

There are times when meaning fades and disappears. We are not spared this experience despite our faith in God. On the contrary, sometimes this confusion is felt all the more poignantly precisely because we have put all our trust in God. We are tempted to question the love of the Lord for us, to fear that he has lost control of history. Is he hiding? Has he forgotten us? Doubt creeps in; we slowly drift into despair. And yet, just as darkness becomes unbearable, we are granted access to a more authentic worship, that is a deeper relationship with the Lord. Jesus' passion helps us to understand how this happens. When we are tempted to doubt the Lord, we must not give over to guilt. Our heart falters, we lose the momentum that has driven our faith until now, our motivation vanishes, we are unable to react positively – and yet we must not think that it is our fault, that there is something wrong with us; we must not be afraid. When this happens, not only does the Lord not condemn us, but he himself provides us with the words we need to transform this distress into prayer. In these times of powerlessness, all we can do is turn our ordeals into prayer through the same words, the same prayer that Jesus uttered on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

The path to worship



Dr Luigi Gioia concludes this series of reflections for Lent.

5 APRIL 2020

PALM SUNDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

YEAR A

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK II