

Holy Saturday: “The corpse of Christ”

Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, who are hidden disciples of Christ, intercede for Him making use of the high positions they hold. In the hour of loneliness, of total abandonment and of scorn..., it is then that they stand up for him audacter, boldly (Mark 15:43)...: heroic courage!

19 April

With them I too will go up to the foot of the Cross; I will press my arms

tightly round the cold Body, the corpse of Christ, with the fire of my love...; I will unnail it, with my reparation and mortifications..., I will wrap it in the new winding-sheet of my clean life, and I will bury it in the living rock of my breast, where no one can tear it away from me, and there, Lord, take your rest! Were the whole world to abandon you and to scorn you... serviam!, I will serve you, Lord. (The Way of the Cross, Fourteenth Station, 1)

I expect you have noticed how some mothers, moved by a legitimate pride, are quick to appear alongside their children when success comes their way, when they receive some public acclaim. But there are other mothers who, even at times like these, stay in the background, showing their love silently. This was Mary's way, and Jesus knew it.

But when it comes to the scandal of the Sacrifice of the Cross, Mary is there, hearing with sadness how 'the passers-by blasphemed against him, tossing their heads, Come now, they said, you would destroy the temple and build it up in three days, rescue yourself; come down from that cross, if you are the Son of God.' Our Lady is there listening to the words of her Son, united to him in his suffering, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' What could she do? She united herself fully with the redemptive love of her Son, and offered to the Father her immense sorrow, which pierced her pure Heart like a sharp edged sword.

Jesus is comforted anew by the quiet, loving presence of his Mother. Mary does not shout; she does not run about frantically. *Stabat*: she is there, standing next to her Son. It is then that Jesus looks at her, and then turning his gaze to John he exclaims,

'Woman, this is thy son. Then he said to the disciple, This is thy Mother.' In the person of John, Christ is entrusting all men to his Mother, and especially his disciples: those who were to believe in him.

Felix culpa, the Church sings. Happy fault, that has brought us so great and wonderful a Redeemer. Happy fault, we could add, which has merited that we should receive Mary as our Mother. Now we are safe. Nothing should worry us now, because Our Lady, the crowned Queen of heaven and earth, is omnipotent in her supplication before our Father God. Jesus cannot deny anything to Mary, nor to us, who are children of his own Mother. (Friends of God, 287-288)

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