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Friday's Gospel: The Woman Who Gave Birth to Life

Gospel for Friday in the 6th Week of Easter, and commentary.

Gospel (*Jn 16:20-23*)

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the

anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world. So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name.”

Commentary

Jesus urges his disciples not to be dismayed when they experience sadness and contempt, trials that must be faced to reach final joy. The same Peter who was overcome by fear on being recognized as a disciple of the Master and then wept bitterly for his sin (cf. *Lk* 22:54-62), will one day praise the courageous attitude of the first Christians: “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while

you may have to suffer various trials” (1 Pet 1:6).

A woman about to give birth embraces her suffering because she knows it is the path to a new life. This powerful image evokes striking moments in the history of salvation. God told the first woman after the first sin: “I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children” (*Gens* 3:16). But in that tragic moment, God also said to the serpent, the instigator of sin: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed” (*Gen* 3:15). And in the fullness of time Jesus came, born of a woman (cf. *Gal* 4:4). Mary, Mother and Virgin, gave birth without pain to the Redeemer. But at the foot of the Cross, Mary's “hour” arrived: she experienced the pain of being a Mother, taking on her Son's pain as her own. Mary thus became with her Son a mediator in the

Redemption. There was no suffering like her suffering (cf. *Lam* 1:12), for she was filled with a love capable of cooperating in giving birth to the Christian life for millions and millions of men and women of all times and races.

Filled with faith, we too experience the loving look of the Risen Christ, and reborn through Baptism, we live the life of God's sons and daughters. We may experience trials of pain and affliction, but we do not want to let anything or anyone steal our joy, as Pope Francis has often reminded us. The words with which he began his first Apostolic Exhortation are very relevant here: "The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of those who encounter Jesus."^[1] —

^[1] Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, no. 1.

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