

“It is enough to choose to love freely each day”

In his 27 August general audience, Pope Leo XIV continued his catechetical cycle on Jesus Christ, our hope, speaking about Jesus' self-surrender in his Passion.

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Dear brothers and sisters,

Today we pause to reflect on a scene that marks the beginning of Jesus' Passion: the moment of his arrest in

the Garden of Olives. The evangelist John, with his characteristic depth, does not present us with a frightened Jesus who runs away or hides. On the contrary, he shows us a man who is free, who steps forward and speaks, facing with courage the hour in which the light of the greatest love can be revealed.

“Jesus, knowing everything that was going to happen to him, went out and said to them, ‘Whom are you looking for?’” (Jn 18:4). Jesus knows what awaits him. Yet he chooses not to retreat. He gives himself up, and not out of weakness, but out of love. His love is so complete, so mature, that it does not fear rejection. Jesus is not captured; he lets himself be captured. He is not the victim of an arrest, but the author of a gift. In this gesture lies a hope of salvation for humanity: the knowledge that even in the darkest hour, we can still be free to love to the very end.

When Jesus answers, “I am he,” the soldiers fall to the ground. This is a mysterious moment, because that expression, in biblical revelation, evokes the very name of God: “I AM.” Jesus reveals that God’s presence is made manifest right where humanity experiences injustice, fear, and loneliness. Right there, the true light is ready to shine, unafraid of being overwhelmed by the advance of darkness.

In the middle of the night, when everything seems to be collapsing, Jesus shows that Christian hope is not an escape, but a choice. This attitude springs from deep prayer, asking God not merely to spare us from suffering, but to give us the strength to persevere in love, because a life freely offered in love cannot be taken from us.

“If you are looking for me, let these men go” (Jn 18:8). At the moment of

his arrest, Jesus is not concerned about saving himself; he only wants his friends to go free. This shows that his sacrifice is a true act of love. Jesus allows himself to be captured and imprisoned by the guards so that his disciples can be set free.

Jesus lived every day of his life as preparation for this dramatic and sublime moment. That is why, when it comes, he has the strength not to seek an escape route. His heart knows well that losing life out of love is not a failure but possesses a mysterious fruitfulness, like the grain of wheat that, falling to the earth, does not remain alone but dies and bears fruit.

Jesus too feels troubled before a path that seems to lead only to death and the end. Yet he is equally convinced that only a life lost for love will, in the end, be found again. This is what true hope means: not trying to avoid

pain, but believing that even in the heart of the most unjust suffering lies the seed of new life.

And what about us? How often do we cling to our life, our plans, our security, without realizing that by doing so we end up alone? The logic of the Gospel is different: only what is given bears fruit; only love that becomes a gift can restore trust even where everything seems lost.

The Gospel of Mark also speaks of a young man who, when Jesus is arrested, runs away naked (cf. Mk 14:51). It's an enigmatic image, but deeply evocative. In our attempt to follow Jesus, we too experience moments when we are caught off guard and stripped of our certainties. These are the hardest moments, when we feel tempted to abandon the Gospel path because love seems like an impossible journey. Yet, at the end of the Gospel, it will be a young

man who announces the Resurrection to the women, no longer naked, but clothed in a white robe.

This is the hope of our faith: our sins and hesitations do not stop God from forgiving us and rekindling in us the desire to begin again, making us capable of giving our lives for others.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us also learn to entrust ourselves to the good will of the Father, allowing our lives to become a response to the goodness we have received. In life, we don't need to have everything under control. It is enough to choose to love freely each day. This is true hope: knowing that even in the darkness of trial, God's love sustains us and brings forth in us the fruit of eternal life.

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