

## Sorrowful Mystery meditations with Pope Francis

### **First Sorrowful Mystery – The agony in the garden**

Jesus indicates one trial the Apostles will find themselves facing is the sensation, which some may feel, that God Himself has abandoned them, remaining distant and silent. Here too, Jesus exhorts them not to fear, because even while experiencing these and other pitfalls, the lives of the disciples rest firmly in the hands of God, who loves us and looks after us. They are like the three temptations: to sugar-coat the Gospel, to water it down; second, persecution; and third, the sensation that God has abandoned us. Even Jesus suffered this trial in the garden of olives and on the cross: “Father, why have you forsaken me?”, says Jesus. At times one feels this spiritual aridness. We must not be afraid of it. The Father takes care of us, because we are greatly valued in His eyes. What is important is the frankness, the courage of our witness, of our witness of faith: “recognizing Jesus before others” and continuing to do good. May Mary Most Holy, model of trust and abandonment in God in the hour of adversity and danger, help us never to surrender to despair, but rather always to entrust ourselves to Him and to His grace, since the grace of God is always more powerful than evil.

*Pope Francis, Angelus, 21 Jun 2020*

### **Second Sorrowful Mystery – The scourging at the Pillar**

How did the Lord serve us? By giving his life for us. We are dear to Him; we cost Him dearly. Saint Angela of Foligno said she once heard Jesus say: “My love for you is no joke”. His love for us led Him to sacrifice Himself and to take upon Himself our sins. This astonishes us: God saved us by taking upon Himself all the punishment of our sins. Without complaining, but with the humility, patience and obedience of a servant, and purely out of love. And the Father upheld Jesus in His service. He did not take away the evil that crushed Him, but rather strengthened Him in His suffering so that our evil could be overcome by good, by a love that loves to the very end. Why did all this take place? Once again, it was done for our sake, to serve us. So that when we have our back to the wall, when we find ourselves at a dead end, with no light and no way of escape, when it seems that God Himself is not responding, we should remember that we are not alone. Jesus experienced total abandonment in a situation He had never before experienced in order to be one with us in everything. He did it for me, for you, for all of us; He did it to say to us: “Do not be afraid, you are not alone. I experienced all your desolation in order to be ever close to you”.

*Pope Francis, Palm Sunday 5 Apr 2020, address for 35<sup>th</sup> World Youth Day.*

### **Third Sorrowful Mystery – The crowning with thorns**

In the Gospel we read that when people go to Jesus to make Him king, He leaves. And when the unclean spirits want to reveal His divine majesty, He silences them. Why? Because Jesus does not want to be misunderstood, He does not want people to confuse the true God, who is humble love, with a false god, a worldly god who puts on a show and imposes himself by force. He's not an idol. He is God who has made Himself a man, like each of us, and expresses Himself as a man but with the strength of His divinity. When is the identity of Jesus solemnly proclaimed? When the centurion says, "Truly this man was the Son of God." It is said there, as soon as He gave His life on the cross, because we can no longer be

mistaken: we see that God is omnipotent in love, and not in any other way. It's His nature, because He's like that. He is Love. You might object, "What can I do with a God so weak, that He dies? I would prefer a strong God, a powerful God!" But you know, the power of this world passes while love remains. Only love protects the life we have, because it embraces our weaknesses and transforms them. We can change our stories by drawing near to him, welcoming the salvation he offers us. Let us open our hearts in prayer, let His gaze be on us and understand that we are not alone, but loved, because the Lord does not abandon us and never forgets us.

*Pope Francis 8 May 2020 General Audience*

#### **Fourth Sorrowful Mystery – The carrying of the cross**

Jesus says: "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me". In this way He indicates the way of the true disciple, showing two attitudes. The first is 'to renounce oneself', which does not mean a superficial change, but a conversion, a reversal of mentality and of values. The other attitude is that of taking up one's own cross. It is not just a matter of patiently enduring daily tribulations, but of bearing with faith and responsibility that part of toil, and that part of suffering that the struggle against evil entails. The life of Christians is always a struggle. The Bible says that the life of Christians is a military undertaking: fighting against the evil spirit, fighting against Evil. Thus the task of "taking up the cross" becomes participating with Christ in the salvation of the world. Considering this, we allow the cross hanging on the wall at home, or that little one that we wear around our neck, to be a sign of our wish to be united with Christ in lovingly serving our brothers and sisters, especially the littlest and most fragile. The cross is the holy sign of God's Love, it is a sign of Jesus' Sacrifice. Each time we fix our gaze on the image of Christ crucified, let us contemplate that He, as the true Servant of the Lord, has accomplished His mission, giving life, spilling His blood for the pardoning of sins. May the Virgin Mary, united to her Son unto Calvary, help us not to retreat in the face of the trials and suffering that witnessing to the Gospel entails.

*Pope Francis 30 Aug 2020 Angelus*

#### **Fifth Sorrowful Mystery – The crucifixion and death of Jesus**

We must not be afraid to contemplate the cross as a moment of defeat, of failure. When Paul reflects on the mystery of Jesus Christ, he says some powerful things. He tells us that Jesus emptied himself, annihilated himself, was made sin to the end and took all our sins upon himself, all the sins of the world: he was a 'rag', a condemned man. Paul was not afraid to show this defeat and even this can enlighten our moments of darkness, our moments of defeat. But the cross is also a sign of victory for us Christians. We have been saved by the cross, by the fact that Jesus chose to sink to the very lowest point, but with the power of divinity. The cross teaches us that in life there is failure and victory. We must be capable of tolerating defeat, of bearing our failures patiently, even those of our sins because He paid for us.

*Pope Francis 14 Sep 2018 Homily*

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