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# AN INVITATION OPEN TO ALL

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In the Catholic liturgy, ***"Holy Week"*** is the most important week of the church year. During Holy Week, we commemorate the main events in the life of Jesus of Nazareth: his passion, death, and resurrection, which - at the same time - constitute the events by which his disciples believe that, following Jesus Christ, we achieve our own salvation and our own full, abundant, eternal, and happy lives.

Holy Week opens with ***Palm Sunday***, when we commemorate Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem, celebrated by the people with cloaks and olive branches as "the one who comes in the name of the Lord." (Mk 11:9-10) This is the same city and the same people who, days later, will witness and become accomplices in the condemnation of the innocent Jesus and his death on the cross.

During this same week, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday are three days known as the ***Paschal Triduum***. On ***Holy Thursday***, Christians commemorate the Supper-Testament and farewell of Jesus, when he provides an example of a new way of exercising power by serving and washing the feet of his disciples (Jn 13). He then leaves us one new law for his disciples: the commandment of love. This is a love that springs from the recognition of God as Father and of all of us as brothers and sisters. This is the love with which his disciples are called henceforth to establish all their relationships and will be the "sign" that they are Christians (Jn 13:35).

The breaking of the bread, the Lord's Supper, or the Eucharist (1 Cor 11:23-32) will be, for the disciples, a sign of Christ's presence in the community: *"Do this in remembrance of me"* (Lk 22:19). Just as the daily bread summons, unites, and strengthens the life of the guests around the same table, Christ – confessed as the Bread of Life – is the one who summons the ecclesial community, who gathers us as brothers and sisters and makes us "one" (Jn 17:21-23) and who gives us life, new and abundant life (Jn 10:10).

On ***Good Friday***, with the reading of the text of the Gospel of John, we commemorate the passion of Jesus, the unjust judgment, condemnation, sufferings, mockery, and contempt, without counting the worst of the evil, the road to Golgotha and the Nazarene's death on the cross.

On ***Holy Saturday***, we remain, in prayer and liturgical silence, at the tomb of Jesus, and, at the stroke of midnight, we celebrate the ***Easter Vigil***: the most important event in the lives of believers: the resurrection, Easter, the passage, the renewing of the mind (Eph 4:23-32), the transformation of life that those who encounter Christ experienced and are experiencing today. The Easter Vigil represents a "passage" into a new life through which we Christians confess the Crucified Risen One, Living among us, Lord of Life and history.

Two thousand years after these events, a valid celebration of Holy Week asks us not only to remember or recall these past events that occurred in the person of Jesus, but also to commemorate, that is, to review our historical present in the light of those events, to verify, looking to the future, that the life, deeds, and words of Jesus illuminate our own lives, that, even today, millions of innocent people continue to be unjustly condemned, to confess that today we still need the commandment of love and the transformation of our lives that we celebrate at Easter.

We commemorate that everything that happened in Jesus' past continues to have repercussions today and occurs in the lives of those who – like Jesus – live in truth, love, serve, work for peace and justice, and yearn for a better, more humane, more fraternal, and united world.

In our daily lives, we have become accustomed, unfortunately, to injustices that breed violence, to a thousand abuses against human rights, to mass exterminations and death. But we are not accustomed to a man giving his life for what he believes in and for the benefit of others.

Holy Week, especially Good Friday, reminds us that in the depths of the human soul, there is also goodness, the capacity for service, and self-giving for others. It is to this lifestyle that Jesus of Nazareth invites us. To be able to *"deny ourselves"* (Mt 16:24-26) and serve with our lives better causes, nobler causes, higher interests, the common good, and all the values, ideals, desires, and aspirations that are most proper, connatural, and certain of every human being.

Good Friday reminds us that even today – as in the time of Jesus –innocent people are sometimes condemned to death, there are millions carrying crosses unjustly imposed upon them by others, and that today, there are also the fallen on the path of life – three times and more – and in every corner of the earth.

They are felled by hunger, vices, and abandonment, dejected by the lack of social opportunities and the weight of hopeless existences, nailed to the cross of undignified life situations that they did not choose or that they cannot change, stripped of their rights as persons and as citizens.

Today, there are also thousands of prophets, men, and women, persecuted and martyrs for the truth. Today, there is also an urgent need for the presence of Cyrenaeans and Veronicas, of men and women who help carry the cross of their brothers and sisters, who wipe the faces of their fellow men. There is an urgent need for the presence of men and women who, following the son of the carpenter and teacher of Nazareth, understand human coexistence as an opportunity to serve and share daily bread and as a space for fraternity, with the certainty that *"there is more joy in giving than in receiving"* (Acts 20:35)

The life of Jesus, like that of no other personage in history, is marked by contrasts, the disconcerting, and paradoxes. His life, deeds, words, attitudes, message, and invitation are still valid today as a universal invitation to humanize ourselves, to love and serve one another in order to build the reign of God in the world, to bring divinity closer to our humanity, to make heaven on earth (Rev 21:1), so that where there is evil there may be an abundance of good, so that the longed-for peace may be possible, so that we may build a fraternal world according to the teachings of the Gospel.