

# ***WORDS THAT ILLUMINATE OUR CROSSES***

Through his deeds and words, Jesus reveals to us a logic, a criterion, and an axiology different from our society's logic. The Gospel of Jesus contains a logic that contradicts and challenges the logic of our change of era and "culture of death," governed, characterized, and conditioned by the "light" trends of postmodernity.

While our world invites us, by all means and in a thousand ways, to embrace attachment, ambition, and greed for material goods; to embrace fear, hatred, violence, resentment, flattery, lies, hypocrisy, servility, individualism, consumerism, hedonism, intolerance, and discrimination; to embrace injustice and marginalization, corruption, ambition for crushing power, appearance, exteriority, noise, ostentation, and pride, etc., Jesus of Nazareth lives, designs, and teaches us a new way of life and of being human. He is the very model of man that God has for every man.

This is a rationale, lifestyle, and model for being a man, according to the will of God the Creator and Father, which is synthesized in the events that – liturgically – we commemorate in the Easter Triduum of Holy Week or Catholic Holy Week, and significantly condensed in two Christian traditions for Good Friday: the "VIA CRUCIS" and "THE SEVEN WORDS."

I will refer to these two devotions very succinctly, in the following lines, confident that their message, like the entire Gospel – which is Jesus himself – has everything to say to every man and woman and all humanity, regardless of creed, culture, or place of origin.

Like all of Jesus' deeds and words, his passion and death that we contemplate on Good Friday offer a universal message. In Jesus, the mystery of the life of every human being is clarified (cf. D.V. 2) since

he assumed all our joys and sufferings, triumphs and failures, our best yearnings for happiness and a better world, and our longings for truth, justice, freedom, and peace.

On his way to the Cross or the VIA CRUCIS, Jesus was – unjustly – CONDEMNED TO DEATH, STRIPPED OF HIS GARMENTS, AND NAILED TO THE CROSS (Stations 1, 10, and 11). Today, in the same way, millions of innocents are condemned to death, those who are disrobed, stripped naked, and nailed to the cross in many ways, in which the death sentence of Jesus is perpetuated and actualized. Millions of persecuted, exiled, isolated, tortured, and disappeared people cry out for justice that is not manipulated or corrupted, for dignity and rights. They cry out amidst unjust and inequitable political or economic systems and face those who justify their humiliation of the weakest as security for society when, in reality, it is to defend their privileges.

Like Jesus of Nazareth, today there are millions of human beings who – in every corner of the earth – CARRY CROSSES (Station 2), cruel and heavy, imposed by others, the product of non-fraternal relationships and of unjust and dehumanizing social conditions, in which – fratricidally – some crush others.

JESUS FALLS, once, twice, and three times (Stations 3, 7, and 9), like millions of men and women fallen and defeated by the weight of injustice. It is the history of the falls of millions of victims and the oppressed that goes unrecorded in the history written by the victors. But Jesus gets up and continues.

JESUS MEETS MARY, HIS MOTHER, AND THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM (Stations 4 and 8). The logic of God, sung by Mary in the Magnificat,” according to which the God of Jesus fills the hungry with abundance while the satiated are sent away empty, consoles all those who – like Jesus and with him – suffer and cry out for hope.

SIMON OF CYRENE HELPS TO CARRY THE CROSS AND VERONICA WIPES THE FACE OF JESUS (Stations 5 and 6). The impoverished, the last, and the “discarded” of the world judge our consciences. I was hungry, thirsty, alone, sick, imprisoned, naked, neglected,

homeless, and without opportunities: Did you help me? Evil and pain exist, but there are also Cyreneans and Veronicas who get down to look, find themselves, serve, give of themselves, and lighten the burden of so many brothers and sisters in need.

JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS (Station 12). The struggle for truth, freedom, peace, and justice knows few successes. There are millions of condemned, dispossessed, crucified, and dead people who fail to see the triumph of the causes for which they gave themselves.

JESUS IS TAKEN DOWN FROM THE CROSS AND LAID IN THE TOMB (Stations 13 and 14). In the righteous Jesus who died, there are all the dead of the earth. There are men and women who struggle to come down from the cross and lower the cross for others. Because the most deeply human longings and the best ideals for a better world are not buried with corpses. The unjustly killed and those killed for truth and justice become a grain of wheat that, if it dies and is buried, bears much fruit.

Whenever truth and justice triumph in the world, whenever we build fraternity and abundant life for all, whenever we are capable of love and forgiveness, whenever we are capable of compassion and service, hope, new life, transformation, the RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST (Station 15) occurs.

Silence is death, and the word – as in biblical creation – is life. With his death on the cross, the Word, which is Jesus himself, was not silenced, and, in his SEVEN LAST WORDS ON THE CROSS, Jesus gives life and invites us to forgiveness. Because without forgiveness, we cannot endure – like Jesus – the sufferings of life, and Jesus' forgiveness saves all those crucified with Him and all history's evildoers. "FORGIVE THEM, FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO" (Lk 23:34)

He invites us to be happy, to the paradise that we all long for and that can only be built in fraternal solidarity through love. "TODAY YOU WILL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE" (Lk 23:43).

He invites us to build the world as a great family, a great table in which there is a place for everyone and everyone eats: the family of

God's children. "WOMAN, BEHOLD YOUR SON, BEHOLD YOUR MOTHER" (Jn 19:26-27)

He invites us to trust that – despite sorrows – God is present. "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY YOU HAVE FORSAKEN ME?" (Mk 15:34)

He invites us to experience that God is thirsty for our love for others, thirsty for us to do his will, and to experience, at the same time, our thirst for fullness for God. "I THIRST" (Jn 19:28)

When we begin to love, forgive, and serve, we begin to be perfect as God is perfect, as God is good, compassionate, and merciful. And then, with Jesus, we can say: "IT IS FINISHED" (Jn 19:30)

Fears paralyze us. Living in fear is not living. Waiting and resting in God, in God alone – like God himself on the seventh day of Genesis – is the culmination of creation, our existence, and history. "FATHER, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT" (Lk 23:46)

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