

OUR HOLY WEEK, EVERY DAY ...

April 2nd, 2023

During these last fifty years, we have witnessed an accelerated and very dynamic growth of the Hispanic community in the United States. This growth has made the Hispanic community the largest minority within this nation's population. With this increase in the Hispanic presence, the number of faithful Catholics in the U.S. Church has also grown, and with it, interest in issues concerning the Catholic Church has also increased among this population.

The week we call Holy Week is approaching. Holy Week, celebrated in 2023 between April 2-9, represents the most significant week in the annual worship and liturgy of the world's Catholic Christians. During Holy Week, and especially during the Easter Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday night), Christians concisely observe the events that, occurred during the life of Jesus of Nazareth, which constitute the pillars on which our Christian faith is founded: his passion, his death, and his resurrection because, as the Apostle Paul says: "If Christ has not been raised, then empty is our preaching; empty, too, our faith".

Now, this annual commemoration of Holy Week can be accomplished like a stroll through a museum of antiquities, a memory and lament for unjust events that occurred in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, without impacting, affecting or transforming our own lives and days.

But the passion, death and resurrection of the Nazarene can be commemorated authentically and, more than that, we can make his whole life project both valid and relevant today. This means remembering and committing to memory what happened in the person of Jesus, but - at the same time and in that same light - studying, questioning, challenging, and renewing our own lives and days entirely, so that we can work toward building a better future.

Holy Week marks its beginnings with Palm Sunday. The commemoration of Jesus' arrival to Jerusalem and the reading of the drama of Jesus' passion and death preview what we commemorate days later in the Easter Triduum: the passion and condemnation of this innocent man, his death through which he endorses a lifestyle that he himself lives and preaches as synonymous with happiness and that consists in selflessly giving our lives for those we love because "whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for the gospel will save it and earn it for eternity"... and the resurrection, through which God the Father validates, completely, the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth as "the way, the truth and the life" that God wills and suggests, in Jesus, for every man and woman of goodwill.

The entirety of the life of Jesus, especially in the Catholic liturgy of Holy Week, is offered to us as a model for humanity, as the first calling to which all of us who recognize ourselves as creatures and children of God the Father in Jesus Christ must aspire, because "the mystery that is man takes on light in the mystery of the incarnate Word: Jesus Christ." (GS 22)

Thus, today just like yesterday, the hopes, pain, suffering, and evil that every human experiences in the daily effort of being a man and a woman remains - especially during Holy Week and

specifically on Good Thursday and Friday - illuminated by the pain and sufferings of the man from Nazareth who, confidently, entrusts his life and destiny into the hands of the Father ("... but let not my will be done, but thine"). Concurrently with the Easter Vigil, this illuminates our thirst for infinity, our hope and longing for transcendence, our dreams of a full life, our hopes for a future that has not been spent by our own here and now, in this time and space that we occupy in history.

In a world rife with inconsistencies between what is said and done and what is discordant and draws attention, even today dividing history into two parts, the figure of Jesus of Nazareth faced his death on the cross until his very last breath with total authority, absolute transparency and congruence between what he lived and preached and between what he proclaimed and denounced through his deeds and words.

The Resurrection, a confession of faith about the triumph of life over death in Jesus, is – at the same time – a confession in which, in the ultimate and definitive destiny of man, it is not death, but life that triumphs; not despair, but hope; not evil, but God's merciful goodness.

This confession of faith pushes and commits us to build with our deeds and words and with our attitudes and behaviors, spaces of abundant life in our own here and now. The fulfilled life we await in the afterlife begins in the here and now or our daily yearnings. The new heaven must begin with a new earth, in a new society of new men and women, with a new way of relating fraternally, justly and in solidarity with each other.

All the events that took place in the person of Jesus are repeated today and clarify the life of those who can wash the feet of their brothers and sisters and build fraternity by breaking and sharing bread or in the death sentences and unjust deaths of so many innocent people. Because that Thursday and Friday two thousand years ago still resonate and make relevant today the sufferings of those who commit themselves to carrying their crosses and the crosses of others and in the lives of the Cyreneans and Veronicas who alleviate the sufferings of others. Because the falls that Jesus suffered, on his way to Calvary, clarify our own falls and because his nakedness illuminates the lives of the millions who have been stripped and deprived in a thousand ways in our world.

Today, although we have grown accustomed to a thousand forms of suffering, violence, injustice and death, we are called upon to build a world in which the perfection of man is found in the new commandment of love, according to the ideals, values and criteria of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in which those of us who call ourselves "Christians" and "Catholics" believe and profess.

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