



The Holy See

WAY OF THE CROSS AT THE COLOSSEUM

REFLECTION OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Good Friday, 14 April 2006

Dear Brothers and Sisters, We have accompanied Jesus on the "Way of the Cross". We have accompanied him here, on the route of the martyrs, in the Colosseum where so many suffered for Christ and gave their life for the Lord, where in so many, the Lord himself has suffered once again. Thus, we have understood that the "Via Crucis" is neither something of the past nor of any specific point of the earth. The Lord's Cross embraces the world; his "Via Crucis" crosses continents and epochs. In the Way of the Cross, we cannot merely be spectators. We too are involved, so we must seek our place: where are we? In the Way of the Cross, it is impossible to remain neutral. Pilate, the sceptic intellectual, tried to be neutral, to remain uninvolved; but precisely in this way he took a stance against justice, because of the conformism of his career.

In the mirror of the Cross we have seen all the sufferings of humanity today. In the Cross of Christ we have seen the suffering of abandoned and abused children; the threats to the family; the division of the world into the pride of the rich who do not see Lazarus at the door and the misery of the multitudes who are suffering hunger and thirst. But we have also seen "stations" of consolation. We have seen the Mother, whose goodness stays faithful unto death and beyond death. We have seen the courageous woman, who stood before the Lord and was not afraid to show solidarity with this Suffering One. We have seen Simon the Cyrenian, an African, who carried the Cross with Jesus. Finally, we have seen, through these "stations" of consolation, that consolation, just as suffering, is never-ending. We have seen that on the Way of the Cross, Paul found the zeal of his faith and kindled the light of love. We have seen how St Augustine found his way: as well as Francis of Assisi, St Vincent de Paul, St Maximilian Kolbe and Mother Teresa of Calcutta. So it is that we too are invited to find our place, to discover with these great, courageous saints, the way with Jesus and for Jesus: the way of goodness and truth; the courage of love. We have understood that the "Way of the Cross" is not simply a collection of the obscure and sad things of the world. Nor is it a form of moralism, ineffective in the end. It is not a cry of protest that changes

nothing. The Way of the Cross is the way of mercy, the way of mercy that puts a limit on evil: this is what we learned from Pope John Paul II. It is the way of mercy, hence, the way of salvation. Thus, we are invited to take the way of mercy and with Jesus, put a limit on evil. Let us pray to the Lord to help us be "infected" by his mercy. Let us pray to the Holy Mother of Jesus, the Mother of Mercy, that we too can be men and women of mercy, and thereby contribute to the world's salvation, to the salvation of creatures: to be men and women of God. Amen!

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