



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE
"STATIONS OF THE CROSS"**

Good Friday, 28 March 1997

"Christus factus est pro nobis oboediens usque ad mortem - mortem autem Crucis" (Phil 2:8).

1. "For us Christ became obedient unto death, even death on a Cross" (cf. Phil 2:8). These words of Saint Paul sum up the message which Good Friday proclaims to us. Today the Church does not celebrate the Eucharist, as though she wished to emphasize that it is impossible, on the day when the *bloody* Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross was consummated, to make that Sacrifice present in an *unbloody* manner in the Sacrament.

Today the Eucharistic Liturgy is replaced by the impressive rite of the *adoration of the Cross*, at which I presided a little earlier in Saint Peter's Basilica. The hearts of those who took part in that rite are still full of the emotions which they experienced during the reading of the liturgical texts about the Lord's Passion.

How can we fail to be touched by Isaiah's detailed description of the "man of sorrows", despised and rejected by men, who bore the weight of our suffering, and was smitten for our transgressions (cf. Is 53:3-5)?

And how can we fail to be moved by Christ's "loud cries and tears", evoked by the author of the Letter to the Hebrews (cf. 5:7)?

2. Following the stations of the *Way of the Cross*, we have just contemplated the tragic moments of the Passion: Christ carrying his Cross, falling under its weight, hanging on it in agony and, in the final phase of his suffering, praying: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Lk 23:46),

expressing his total and trustful self-offering.

Today our gaze is closely concentrated on the Cross. We meditate on the mystery of the Cross, perpetuated down the centuries in the sacrifice of innumerable believers, of so many men and women associated through martyrdom with Jesus' death. We contemplate the mystery of the Lord's agony and death, which in our own day too continues in the pain and suffering of individuals and peoples severely tried by violence and war.

Wherever a person is struck and killed, it is Christ himself who is hurt and crucified. The mystery of suffering, the mystery of limitless love!

We remain in silent recollection before this unfathomable mystery.

3. *"Ecce lignum Crucis ...", "Behold the wood of the Cross, on which hung Christ, the Saviour of the world. Come, let us adore!"*

This evening the Cross shines with extraordinary power at the end of the "Way of the Cross", here at the Colosseum. This monument of ancient Rome is linked in popular memory to the martyrdom of the first Christians. It is therefore a place particularly suitable for re-enacting, year after year, Christ's Passion and Death. *"Ecce lignum Crucis!"* How many of our brothers and sisters in the faith came to share in the Cross of Christ during the Roman persecutions!

The text of the meditations which have guided us along this *"Way of the Cross"* was prepared by my Venerable Brother Karekin I Sarkissian, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians. I thank him cordially, and expressing once more my gratitude for the recent visit which he paid me, I greet him together with all the Christians of Armenia. I also extend my greeting to Archbishop Nerses Bozabalian, who has joined us in the Way of the Cross as the representative of the Catholicos of Armenia. Many brothers and sisters of that Church and Nation have shared in the Cross of Christ by the sacrifice of their lives! Today, in union with them and with all those who in every corner of the world, in every continent and the different countries of the globe, share through their suffering and death in the Cross of Christ, we wish to repeat: *"Ecce lignum Crucis..."*, *"Behold the wood of the Cross, on which hung Christ, the Saviour of the world. Come, let us adore!"*

4. As the shades of night envelop us, an eloquent image of the mystery which surrounds our existence, we cry to You, Cross of our salvation, our faith!

O Lord, a ray of light shines from your Cross. In your Death our death is conquered, and we are offered the hope of resurrection. Clinging to your Cross, we wait in joyful hope for your return, Lord Jesus, our Redeemer!

"Dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life. Lord Jesus, come in glory".

Amen.

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