

DAY 7

II - PASSION AND DEATH

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Following our retreat's leitmotiv –*listen to him, my beloved Son*– we will ask to be helped to listen faithfully to Christ's definitive words and definitive deed.

Jesus experiences total poverty and destitution: *kénosis*. **Physically** he hangs on the cross as naked as he came into the world at that now so distant first Christmas and he does not even have a tomb of his own or a family tomb. For Hebrews owning one's tomb was quasi-symbolic of resurrection, of continuing presence in the land, of still belonging. Jesus does not have even that. **Morally** he is completely abandoned not only by those in charge of guaranteeing justice, but even by his closest friends, a deeply existential poverty. He even feels abandoned by his Father, yet in this deeply desolate feeling he is drawn to his Father, a spiritual consolation in the midst of an extremely desolate feeling. Total poverty. As Paul tells us, *he was rich, but became poor for your sake, to make you rich out of his poverty* [2Cor. 8: 9]. A poverty diametrically opposite to the first desert temptation of *having more*. He experiences the deprivation of humiliation in contrast with the second desert temptation of *being recognized and honored more*. He has been betrayed by one he had personally chosen as friend and has been disowned by the man, on whom he wanted to build his Church. Indeed, it takes closeness to be in a position really to hurt: *were an enemy who insulted me, that I could bear... But you... a comrade and dear friend, to whom I was bound by intimate friendship...* [Ps. 55: 12-14]. Judas' hypocrisy and two-faced-ness in kissing him must have hurt him particularly and Jesus no longer tries to protect Judas' anonymity in front of the other disciples, as he had done at the last supper: *do you betray me with a kiss?*

The trial itself is a supreme mockery of fidelity to God's law: they condemn Jesus in the name of theology. Pilate waffles in his recognition of Jesus' innocence. He is willing to do something for Jesus, but only up to a point. He will not risk losing his status of "friend of Caesar". Jesus ends up being lumped into the same category as criminals, sharing with them the same sentence. And he is taunted by his judges: *play the prophet for us... come down from the cross... he trusted in God...* What is going through Jesus' heart as he experiences all this abuse? We need trust to ask him directly.

We want to *listen* to his last "seven words", for they reflect where Jesus' mind and heart were at that point, how he was interpreting what was taking place:

- *Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing*
- *This very day you will be with me in paradise*
- *Woman, this is your son ...this is your mother*
- *My God... why have you abandoned me?*
- *I am thirsty*: in its widest sense of thirst, Mother Teresa's motto
- *It is accomplished*: he has paid the full price of faithfulness to his Father
- *Father, into your hands I commend my spirit*

May the Lord give us the grace to *listen to him, my beloved Son*.

REFERENCE SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

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Mt. 26 :47 - 27: 66; Mk. 14 :43 - 15: 47; Lk. 22: 47 - 23: 56; Jn. 18 and 19