



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

GENERAL AUDIENCE

St. Peter's Square

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Video

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

Today, midway through Holy Week, the liturgy presents us with a regrettable episode: the account of the betrayal of Judas, who goes to the leaders of the Sanhedrin to bargain for and deliver his Master to them: "What will you give me if I deliver him to you?". At that moment, a price was set on Jesus. This tragic act marks the beginning of Christ's Passion, a dolorous path which he chooses with absolute freedom. He himself says it clearly: "I lay down my life.... No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (Jn 10:17-18). And thus by this betrayal Jesus' journey of humiliation and despoliation begins. As though he were an article for sale: this one costs 30 pieces of silver.... Once he has taken the path of humiliation and self-abandonment, Jesus travels along it to the very end.

Jesus attains complete humiliation through "death on the Cross". It was the worst form of death, that reserved for slaves and criminals. Jesus was considered a prophet but he died like a criminal. As we contemplate Jesus in his Passion, we see reflected the suffering of humanity, and we discover the divine answer to the mystery of evil, suffering and death. Many times we feel horror at the evil and suffering that surrounds us and we ask ourselves: "Why does God allow it?". It deeply wounds us to see suffering and death, especially that of the innocent! When we see children suffer it wounds our hearts: it is the mystery of evil. And Jesus takes all of this evil, all of this suffering upon himself. This week it would benefit all of us to look at the crucifix, to kiss the wounds of Jesus, to kiss them on the crucifix. He took upon himself all human suffering, he clothed himself in

this suffering.

We expect God in His omnipotence to defeat injustice, evil, sin and suffering with a triumphant divine victory. Yet God shows us a humble victory that, in human terms, appears to be failure. We can say that God conquers in failure! Indeed, the Son of God appears on the Cross as a defeated man: he suffers, is betrayed, reviled and finally dies. But Jesus allows evil to be unleashed on him and he takes it upon himself in order to conquer it. His Passion is not an accident: his death — that death — was “written”. Truly we cannot find many explanations. It is a puzzling mystery, the mystery of God’s great humility: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son” (Jn 3:16). This week let us think deeply about the suffering of Jesus and let us say to ourselves: this is for my sake. Even if I had been the only person in the world, he would have done it. He did it for me. Let us kiss the crucifix and say: for my sake, thank you Jesus, for me.

When all seems lost, when no one remains, for they will strike “the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered” (Mt 26:31), it is then that God intervenes with the power of his Resurrection. The Resurrection of Jesus is not the happy ending to a nice story, it is not the “happy end” of a film; rather, it is God the Father’s intervention there where human hope is shattered. At the moment when all seems to be lost, at the moment of suffering, when many people feel the need to get down from the Cross, it is the moment closest to the Resurrection. Night becomes darkest precisely before morning dawns, before the light dawns. In the darkest moment God intervenes and raises.

Jesus, who chose to pass by this way, calls us to follow him on his own path of humiliation. When at certain moments in life we fail to find any way out of our difficulties, when we sink in the thickest darkness, it is the moment of our total humiliation and despoliation, the hour in which we experience that we are frail and are sinners. It is precisely then, at that moment, what we must not deny our failure but rather open ourselves trustingly to hope in God, as Jesus did. Dear brothers and sisters, this week it will do us good to take the crucifix in hand and kiss it many, many times and say: thank you Jesus, thank you Lord. So be it.

Greetings:

I greet all the English-speaking pilgrims taking part in today’s Audience, including those from England, Australia, Canada and the United States. My special greeting goes to the delegation from the NATO Defense College and to the many young people present. Upon all of you, and upon your families, I invoke the gifts of the Spirit for a fruitful celebration of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Lord. God bless you all!

I extend a special thought to *young people*, the *sick* and *newlyweds*. Tomorrow the Easter Triduum, the heart of the liturgical year, begins. Dear *young people*, may you reflect on the price of

blood which the Lord paid for your salvation. Dear *sick* people, may Good Friday teach you patience in moments of the cross. And may you, dear *newlyweds*, fill the walls of your homes with the joy of the Resurrection.