



Liturgy of Good Friday

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Celebrant: Sword-Bishop

My dearly beloved, we are going to have a time of reflection, not in the head but in the heart, about what comprised the ungraspable event slightly more than 2000 years ago. It is horrific to actually be able to recognise how the powerful GOD, above whom there is nothing else, whom no one surpasses, allowed Himself to be so dreadfully beaten at the hands of His own tiny little creatures. And that for the sole reason of what I have been telling you all the time. A human being offended GOD, – a little human being offended the supremely powerful GOD – and all people together cannot atone for it, make amends for it because we are only human, whereas He is GOD. So there had to come someone who is both, so that GOD will be rendered satisfaction. There is man, – GOD cannot do it alone because man sinned – so he had to be a human being, but in order for him to be of equal rank, he had to be GOD at the same time. So the TRINITY decided that the SON of GOD is to assume human flesh and make expiation through His terrible, extremely painful death. He took, indeed, upon Himself all the sins from Adam up to the last man ever to live. Imagine, all the sins from Adam up to the last man alive He took upon Himself – and, you know, GOD has a different view of sin from ours – and so He stood before GOD, a horrifying, I cannot even call it figure. And that was JESUS – all our sins on Him. That He did for us! And what do we do for Him? Or how He puts it Himself: “This I did for you, what are you doing for Me?” Let us start the introductory prayer.

Wound of the right hand: Ecce lignum Crucis

Wound of the left hand: Ecce lignum Crucis

Headwound: Ecce lignum Crucis

Side wound: Ecce lignum Crucis

Wounds of the feet: Ecce lignum Crucis

Oh my people, what have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer Me! What more could I have done for you that I have not done? I planted you as My fairest vine, but you yielded only bitterness. For your sake I scourged Egypt and their firstborn sons, but you gave me over to be scourged.

I led you from slavery to freedom, drowning Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea.

I opened the Red Sea before you; and you, you opened my side with a lance.

I led you on your way in a pillar of cloud; and you, you led me to Pilate's judgement seat.

I fed you with manna in the desert; and you, you struck me with blows and scourges.

I gave you saving water from the rock; and you, you gave me gall and vinegar to drink.

For you I smote the kings of Canaan; and you, you have smitten my head with a reed.

I gave you a royal sceptre; and you, you gave me a crown of thorns.

I even exalted you with great power, and you, you have hanged me high upon the gibbet of the Cross.

My people, what have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer Me.

What more could I have done for you that I have not done? I planted you as My fairest vine, but you yielded only bitterness.

Song: Ach, sieh Ihn dulden blutend sterben ... (O, look at him bearing bleeding dying ...)

(Reading: according to Maria Valtorta, "The Man-GOD, volume 5, chapter 605, The Crucifixion.")

The Judaeans, driven beyond the open space, do not stop insulting, and the unrepentant robber echoes their insults. The other one, who now looks at the Mother with deeper and deeper compassion, and weeps, answers him back sharply, when he hears that Mary also is included in the insult.

“Be silent! Remember that you were born of a woman. And consider that our mothers have wept because of their sons. And they were tears of shame because we are criminals. Our mothers are dead. I would like to ask mine to forgive me. But shall I be able? She was a holy woman. I killed her with the sorrow I gave her. Yes, I am a sinner. And who will forgive me?” And addressing the Mother of GOD: “Mother, in the name of Your dying Son, pray for me!”

The Mother for a moment raises her tortured face and looks at him, the poor wretch who through the remembrance of his mother and the contemplation of the Mother of JESUS moves towards repentance, and she seems to caress him with her kind gentle eyes. Disma weeps louder, which raises even more the mockery of the crowd and of his companion. The former shout: “Very well. Take her as your mother. So she will have two criminal sons!” The latter aggravates the situation saying: “She loves you because you are a smaller copy of her darling.”

JESUS speaks for the first time: “FATHER, forgive them because they do not know what they are doing!”

Music by Heinrich Schütz: JESUS' Seven Last Words

This prayer of JESUS overcomes all fear in Disma. He dares to look at JESUS and says: “LORD, remember me when You are in Your Kingdom. It is just that I should suffer. But give me mercy and peace hereafter. I heard You speak once and I foolishly rejected Your word. I now repent. And I repent of my sins before You, SON of the Most High. I believe that You come from GOD. I believe in Your power. I believe in Your mercy. CHRIST, forgive me in the name of Your Mother and of Your most holy FATHER.”

Jesus turns round on the Cross and looks at him with deep compassion, and He smiles a still beautiful smile with His poor tortured lips. He answers him: "I tell you: today you will be with Me in Paradise."

Music: JESUS' Seven Last Words

The repentant robber calms down, and as he no longer remembers the prayers he learnt when a child, he repeats as an ejaculation: "JESUS Nazarene, King of the Jews, have mercy on me. JESUS Nazarene, King of the Jews, I hope in You. JESUS Nazarene, King of the Jews, I believe in Your Divinity." The other robber continues cursing.

The sky becomes duller and duller. Now the clouds hardly ever open to let the sun shine. On the contrary, they cluster on top of one another in leaden, white, greenish strati, they disentangle according to the caprices of a cold wind, which at times blows in the sky, then descends to the ground, and then drops again, and when it drops the air is almost more sinister, sultry and dull than when it hisses, blowing biting and fast.

The light, previously exceedingly bright, is becoming greenish. And faces look strange. The profiles of the soldiers, under their helmets and in their armour, which were previously shining and have now become rather tarnished in the greenish light and under an ashen-grey sky, are so hard that they seem to be chiselled. The Judaeans, the complexion, hair and beards of whom are mostly brown, seem drowned people, so wan are their faces. The women look like statues of bluish snow because of their deadly paleness, which is accentuated by the light.

JESUS seems to be turning ominously livid, because of a beginning of putrefaction, as if He were already dead. His head begins to hang over His chest. His strength fails Him rapidly. He shivers, although He is burning with fever. And in

His weakness, He whispers the name that so far He has only uttered in the bottom of His heart: "Mother! Mother!" He murmurs it in a low voice, like a sigh, as if He were already lightly delirious and thus prevented from holding back what His will would not like to reveal. And each time Mary makes an unrestrainable gesture of stretching her arms, as if she wished to succour Him. And the cruel people laugh at such pangs of Him who is dying and of her who suffers agonies.

Priests and scribes climb up again as far as the shepherds, who, however, are on the lower open space. And as the soldiers want to drive them back, they react saying: "Are these Galileans staying here? We want to stay here as well, as we have to ascertain that justice is done to the very end. And from afar, in this light, we cannot see."

In fact, many begin to be upset by the light that is enveloping the world and some people are afraid. Also the soldiers point to the sky and to a kind of cone that seems of slate, so dark it is, and that rises like a pine-tree from behind the top of a mountain. It looks like a water-spout. It rises and rises and seems to produce darker and darker clouds, as if it were a volcano belching smoke and lava.

It is in this frightening twilight that JESUS gives John to Mary and Mary to John. He lowers His head, because the Mother has gone closer to the cross to see Him better, and He says: "Woman, this is Your son." Turned to John: "Son, this is your Mother."

Music: JESUS' Seven Last Words

Mary looks even more upset after this word, which is the will of her JESUS, her JESUS, who has nothing to give His Mother but a man, He who out of love for man deprives her of the Man-GOD, born of her. But the poor Mother tries to weep only silently, because it is impossible for her not to weep. Tears

stream down her cheeks notwithstanding all the efforts to refrain them, even if on her lips there is a heartbroken smile to comfort Him.

The sufferings increase more and more. And the light fades more and more. JESUS' sufferings are worse and worse. The body begins to suffer from the arching typical of tetanus, and the clamour of the crowd exasperates it. The death of fibres and nerves extends from the tortured limbs to the trunk, making breathing more and more difficult, diaphragmatic contraction weak and heart beating irregular. The face of JESUS passes, in turns, from very deep-red blushes to the greenish paleness of a person bleeding to death. His lips move with greater difficulty, because the overstrained nerves of the neck and of the head itself, that for dozens of times have acted as a lever for the whole body, pushing on the cross bar, spread the cramp also to the jaws. His throat, swollen by the obstructed carotid arteries, must be painful and must spread its oedema to the tongue, which looks swollen and slow in its movements. His back – even in the moments when the tetanising contractions do not bend it in a complete arch from the nape of His neck to His hips, leaning as extreme points against the stake of the cross – bends more and more forwards because the limbs are continuously weighed down by the burden of the dead flesh.

The people cannot see this situation very clearly, because the light now is like dark ashes, and only those who are at the foot of the cross can see well.

At a certain moment JESUS collapses forwards and downwards, as if He were already dead. He no longer pants. His head hangs inertly forward, His body, from His hips upwards, is completely detached from the cross, forming an angle with its bar. Mary utters a cry: "He is dead!" A tragic cry that spreads in the dark air. And JESUS seems really dead. Another cry of a woman replies to her, and I see a bustle in the

group of the women. Then some ten people go away holding something. But I cannot see who goes away so. The foggy light is too faint. It looks as if we are immersed in a cloud of very dense volcanic ash.

“It is not possible!” shout some of the priests and of the Judaeans. “It is a simulation to make us go away. Soldier, prick Him with your lance. It is a good medicine to give His voice back to Him.” And as the soldiers do not do so, a volley of stones and clods of earth fly towards the cross, hitting the Martyr and falling back on the armour of the Romans. The medicine, as the Judaeans say ironically, works the wonder. Some of the stones have certainly hit JESUS, perhaps the wound of a hand, or the head itself, because they were aiming high. JESUS moans pitifully and recovers His senses. His thorax begins to breathe again with difficulty and His head moves from left to right, seeking where it may rest in order to suffer less, but finding nothing but greater pain.

With great difficulty, pressing once again on His tortured feet, finding strength in His will, and only in it, JESUS stiffens on the cross, He stands upright, as if He were a healthy man with all his strength, He raises His face, looking with wide open eyes at the world stretched at His feet, at the far away town, which one can see just indistinctly as a vague whiteness in the mist, and at the dark sky where every trace of blue and of light has disappeared. And to this closed, compact, low sky, resembling a huge slab of dark slate, He shouts in a loud voice, overcoming with His will-power and with the need of His soul the obstacle of His swollen tongue and His oedematous throat: “Eloi, Eloi, lamma sabachthani!”

Music: JESUS' Seven Last Words

JESUS must feel that He is dying, and in absolute abandonment by Heaven, if He confesses His FATHER's abandonment, with such an exclamation. People laugh and

deride Him. They insult Him saying: "GOD has nothing to do with You! Demons are cursed by GOD!" Other people shout: "Let us see whether Elijah, whom He is calling, will come to save Him." And others say: "Give Him some vinegar, that He may gargle His throat. It helps one's voice! Elijah or GOD, as it is uncertain what this madman wants, are far away. A loud voice is required to make oneself heard!" and they laugh like hyenas or like demons.

But no soldier gives Him vinegar and no one comes from Heaven to give comfort. It is the solitary, total, cruel, also supernaturally cruel agony of the great Victim. The avalanches of desolate grief, which had already oppressed Him at Gethsemane, come back again. The waves of the sins of all the world come back to strike the shipwrecked innocent, to submerge Him in their bitterness.

And above all what comes back is the sensation – more crucifying than the cross itself, more despairing than any torture – that GOD has abandoned Him and that His prayer does not rise to Him. – *Some or other person might think that he, too, is sometimes all alone and deserted; but you have never been the Almighty GOD in Heaven, so He would have lost it all.* – And it is the final torture. The one that accelerates death, because it squeezes the last drops of blood out of the pores, because it crushes the remaining fibres of the heart, because it ends what the first knowledge of this abandonment has begun: death. Because of that, as first cause, my JESUS died, o GOD, who have struck Him for us! Because after Your abandonment, through Your abandonment, what does a person become? Either insane or dead. JESUS could not become insane, because His intelligence was divine, and since intelligence is spiritual, it triumphed over the total trauma of Him whom GOD had struck. So He became a dead man: the Dead Man, the most holy Dead Man, the most innocent Dead Man. He who was the Life, was dead. Killed by GOD's abandonment and by our sins.

Darkness becomes deeper. Jerusalem disappears completely. The very slopes of Calvary seem to vanish. Only the top is visible, as if darkness held it high up to receive the only and last surviving light, laying it as an offering, with its divine trophy, on a pool of liquid onyx, so that it may be seen by love and by hatred. And from that light, which is no longer light, comes the plaintive voice of JESUS: "I am thirsty!"

Music: JESUS' Seven Last Words

A wind in fact is blowing, which makes even healthy people thirsty. A strong wind that now blows continuously, and is full of dust, cold and frightening. And I think of what pain its violent gusts must have caused to the lungs, the heart, the throat of JESUS, and to His frozen, benumbed, wounded limbs. Everything has really combined to torture the Martyr. A soldier goes towards a jar, in which the assistants of the executioner have put some vinegar with gall, so that with its bitterness it may increase the salivation of those condemned to capital punishment. He takes the sponge immersed in the liquid, he sticks it on a thin yet stiff cane, which is already available nearby, and offers the sponge to the dying Victim. JESUS leans eagerly forward towards the approaching sponge. He looks like a starving baby seeking the nipple of its mother. Mary who sees and certainly has such a thought, leaning on John, says with a moan: "Oh! and I cannot give Him even one of my tears. Oh! breast of mine, why do you not trickle milk? Oh! my GOD, why, why do You abandon us thus? A miracle for my Son! Who will lift me up, so that I may quench His thirst with my blood, since I have no milk ...?"

JESUS, who has greedily sucked the sour bitter drink, makes a wry face in disgust. Above all, it must act as a corrosive on His wounded split lips. He withdraws, loses heart, abandons Himself. All the weight of His body falls heavily on His feet and forward. His wounded extremities are the parts that suffer the

dreadful pain as they are torn open by the weight of the body that abandons itself. He makes no further movement to alleviate such pain. His body, from His hips upwards, is detached from the cross, and remains such. His head hangs forward so heavily that His neck seems hollowed in three places: at the throat, which is completely sunken, and at both sides of the sterno-cleido-mastoid muscle. He pants more and more and interruptedly, and it sounds more like a death-rattle than breathing. Now and again a painful fit of coughing brings a light rosy foam to His lips. And the intervals between one expiration and the next one are becoming longer and longer. His abdomen is now motionless. Only His thorax still heaves, but laboriously and with difficulty. Pulmonary paralysis is increasing more and more.

And fainter and fainter, sounding like a child's wailing, comes the invocation: "Mother!" And the poor wretch whispers: "Yes, darling, I am here!" And when His sight becomes misty and makes Him say: "Mother, where are You? I cannot see You any more. Are You abandoning Me as well?" and they are not even words, but just a murmur that can hardly be heard by her who with her heart rather than with her ears receives every sigh of her dying Son, she says: "No, no, SON! I will not abandon You! Listen to me, my dear ... Your Mother is here, she is here... and she only regrets that she cannot come where You are ..."

It is heart-rending. And John weeps openly. JESUS must hear him weep. But He does not say anything. I think that His impending death makes Him speak as if He were raving and that He does not even know what He says, and, unfortunately, He does not even understand His Mother's consolation and His favourite apostle's love.

There is dead silence. Then in utter darkness, the word: "Everything is accomplished!" is clearly heard.

Music: JESUS' Seven Last Words

His death-rattle grows louder and louder, with longer and longer pauses between one rattle and the next one. Time passes in such distressing rhythm. Life comes back when the air is pierced by the harsh breathing of the dying person ... Life stops when the painful sound is no longer heard. One suffers hearing it ... one suffers not hearing it ... One says: "Enough of this suffering!" and then one says: "Oh! GOD! let it not be His last breath."

All the Marys are weeping, with their heads leaning against the scarp. And their weeping is clearly heard, because the crowd is now silent again, to listen to the death-rattles of the dying person. There is deep silence again. Then the supplication pronounced with infinite kindness, with fervent prayer: "FATHER, into Your hands I commit My spirit!"

Music: JESUS' Seven Last Words

Further silence. Also the death-rattle becomes fainter. It is just a breath confined to His lips and throat. Then, there is the last spasm of JESUS. A dreadful convulsion that seems to tear the body with the three nails from the cross, rises three times from the feet to the head, through all the poor tortured nerves; it heaves the abdomen three times in an abnormal way, then leaves it after dilating it as if it were upsetting the intestines, and it drops and becomes hollow as is it were empty. It heaves, swells and contracts the thorax so violently, that the skin sinks between the ribs which stretch appearing under the skin and reopening the wounds of the scourges; it makes the head fall back violently once, twice, three times, hitting the wood hard. It contracts all the muscles of the face in a spasm, accentuating the deviation of the mouth to the right. It opens wide and dilates the eyelids under which one can see the eye-balls roll and the sclera appear. The body is all bent; in the last of the three contractions it is a drawn arch, which vibrates and

is dreadful to look at. And then a powerful cry, unimaginable in that exhausted body, bursts forth rending the air, the “loud cry” mentioned by the Gospels and is the first part of the word “Mother” ... And nothing else ...

His head falls on His chest, His body leans forward. The trembling stops, He breathes no more. JESUS has breathed His last.

Song: Ach JESUS mein, welch grosse Pein... (O JESUS mine, what great agony...)

My dearly beloved, here we have a relic of the Cross. They are two thin shavings from the actual Cross of JESUS CHRIST, in the form of a cross. Attached to it is the seal of a cardinal. We will come forward and show our veneration for this Cross with a genuflection.

Music

The Church often gives the weather blessing with the relic of the Cross, when there is lightning and when it is hailing and in frightening circumstances. However, you also know that there are even indulgences in those churches, in which also a fragment of the true Cross of CHRIST is present. These churches are even raised in title. We need not raise ourselves because the Cross alone has already been raised. I bless you with it.

Praise be to JESUS CHRIST – in all eternity! Amen!