

## Taking Time for Prayer and Reflection

### A Retreat at Home during Holy Week

*Some might consider Holy Week as the best time for a Retreat, because of what we celebrate. Often we pray : "Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again." On this is our faith based. Can I take some time during this week to stop from my normal activities, find a quiet place, seek quiet within, and reflect upon the story of this week. I first become aware of my own being, my own breathing, as I seek to be aware of God's presence with me. The following may assist in my prayer and reflection. Take what is helpful. Stay wherever your God seems to speak to you. Come back to what may have been significant for you. Above all, be with your God. Stop! Listen! Respond! Live!*

**6. "Father into your hands I commit my spirit"**

**7. "It is fulfilled."**

*"It was now about the sixth hour and the sun's light had failed, so that darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. The veil of the Sanctuary was torn right down the middle. Jesus cried out in a loud voice saying, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' With these words he breathed his last."*

(Luke 23:44-46)

*"After this, Jesus knew that everything had now been completed and, so that the scripture should be completely fulfilled, he said: 'I am thirsty.' A jar full of sour wine stood there; so putting a sponge soaked in the wine on a hyssop stick, they held it up to his mouth. After Jesus had taken the wine he said, 'It is fulfilled'; and bowing his head he gave up his spirit."*

(John 19:29-30)

Soon we will celebrate Good Friday, the day of the Cross, a day of suffering, yet a day of hope; a day of mourning, yet a day of victory; a day of sadness, yet a day of joy; a day of endings, yet a day for beginnings.

#### **"...I commit my spirit."**

A devout Jew would end night prayers with the words : 'O God, into your hands I commit my spirit', entrusting one's spirit to God in sleep, confident that God would give back your spirit the next day. Psalm 22 ('My God, ... why have you forsaken me') and Psalm 31 ('..into your hands I commit my spirit') are psalms of complete trust and abandonment to God. Luke has omitted the reference to Psalm 22 and has included in its place these words from Psalm 31. Here Jesus accepts his own death with a simple trust in his Father. Jesus' cry from the cross comes from the depths of his heart. There is the pain and sense of being alone and abandoned. But there is also the cry of confidence from a heart that never lost trust in the Father.

**"...into your hands I commit my spirit."**

With these words Jesus 'breathed his last'. And at last God is revealed, 'the veil of the Temple ... torn in two from top to bottom'. No longer is there a veil separating people from the Holy of Holies. And this revelation is seen by the centurion standing by the cross (Mark 15:39). The old covenant is ended. There are no longer any barriers holding people back from God. God's love, unveiled in the death of Jesus, is now present calling all people to faith and life. The human family is redeemed.

**"It is fulfilled."**

All is accomplished. Jesus' death is the final act of suffering that is to bring to birth a new and redeemed people. We have been redeemed. John continues to remind us that Jesus is the new Paschal Lamb who is dying to take away the sin of the world. Jesus has just died, and we mourn for him. But the mourning is not without hope, for in his death God is victorious and the human family has been redeemed from slavery. From Jesus' pierced heart water flows, and we are invited to draw water with joy from the springs of salvation, the springs of the Saviour.

***"Whom are you looking for? What are you seeking?"***

We are redeemed, but we must continually seek out, long for, desire that life-giving water that is offered us. We are called upon to show in our lives that we believe, and our faith is in the fact that Jesus suffered and died, and that he rose from the dead. Beyond Jesus' death and burial is Easter day. We must not look within the empty tomb for Jesus, he is risen and he lives among us through his Spirit. What am I seeking, what am I longing for? Is it the kind of relationship that the disciples had with Jesus, those men and women who knew him, heard him speak, saw him heal, shared with him at table and in friendship? Jesus, has ascended to the Father, but he lives and is with us in a far greater way than if we walked and talked and shared with him in Palestine those many years ago.

How present is the risen Jesus to me? How often do I pray for the Spirit, that I might deepen within my heart that sense of awareness of Jesus' presence? Am I like Mary of Magdala still searching for him and not knowing where to find him? Have I grown in prayer, in being more contemplative in my life, attentive to the many ways Jesus is present for me - in the word, in people, in my life experiences? Is it the risen Lord that I experience, whereby there is hope and joy in what each day brings? Am I like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, downhearted, not able to recognise when Jesus is beside me, walking away from what I once believed in and to which I made firm commitment? Do I recognise his presence 'in the breaking of bread'? Does my heart 'burn within me' as I talk with him and listen to him in prayer?

## **SCRIPTURE PASSAGES FOR PRAYER:**

**John 13:1-20** Jesus ... began to wash the disciples' feet ... When he went back to the table ... 'Do you understand,; he said, 'what I have done to you? ... I have given you an example.'

**Rom 7:4-6** ...you are able to belong to...him who was raised from the dead to make us live fruitfully for God...having died to what was binding us.

**2 Cor 4:7-12** ...we hold this treasure in pots of earthenware, so that the immensity of the power is God's and not our own ... so that the life of Jesus... may be visible in our mortal flesh.

**Jn 20:11-20** ...Mary was standing outside near the tomb, weeping ... Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?'

**Lk 24:13-35** ... Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but their eyes were prevented from recognising him...

**Phil 4:4-9** ... The Lord is near ... tell God all your desires...in prayer...shot through with gratitude, and the peace of God...will guard your hearts and thoughts.

## **A REFLECTION AT THE END OF THIS TIME OF PRAYER:**

What have been the graces of this time of retreat? What do I thank God for as I reflect upon this time with God? Have I received something of what I asked for? Have I deepened my relationship with God, with Jesus during these days? Can I renew my commitment to my God and to God's call to me to be a disciple of Jesus, a servant of God's people? How can I enable the gifts and graces received from God at this time to bear fruit in the days ahead? What do I ask of my God as I move from these days back to the people and the events of my daily living?