**Holy Week**

**"Jesus, who chose to pass through this life, calls us to follow him on his same way of humiliation"**

VATICAN CITY, April 16, 2014 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org/?utm_campaign=dailyhtml&utm_medium=email&utm_source=dispatch)) - Here is the translation of the Holy Father’s catechesis today during his weekly General Audience in St. Peter’s Square.

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Dear Brothers and Sisters, good morning!

Today, in the middle of Holy Week, the liturgy presents to us a sad episode: the account of Judas’ betrayal, who goes to the heads of the Sanhedrin to bargain and deliver his Master to them. “How much will you give me if I deliver him to you? “ At that moment, Jesus had a price. This tragic act marks the beginning of Christ’s Passion, the painful way he chose with absolute liberty. 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” (John: 17-18). And thus, with this betrayal, the way begins of humiliation, of Jesus’ stripping. As if it was in the market: this costs thirty denarii …Once the way of humiliation and stripping is undertaken, Jesus sees it through to the end.

Jesus reaches complete humiliation with his “death on the cross.” It is the worst death -- that reserved for slaves and criminals. Jesus was considered a prophet, but he died as a criminal. Looking at Jesus in his Passion, we see as in a mirror the sufferings of humanity and we find the divine answer to the mystery of evil, of grief and of death. So often we perceive the horror of the evil and pain that surrounds us and we ask: “Why does God allow it?” It is a profound wound for us to see suffering and death, especially that of the innocent! When we see children suffering, it is a wound to the heart: it is the mystery of evil. And Jesus takes upon himself all this evil, all this suffering. It will do us all good this week to look at the crucifix, to kiss Jesus’ wounds, to kiss him on the cross. 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. Instead, God shows us a humble victory which humanly seems a failure. We can say that God conquers in failure! In fact, the Son of God appears on the cross as a defeated man: he suffers, is betrayed, is despised and finally dies. However, Jesus allows evil to rage on him and he takes it upon himself to defeat it. His Passion is not an incident; his death – that death – was “written.” Truly, we do not find many explanations. It is a disconcerting mystery, the mystery of God’s great humility: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son” (John 3:16). We think so much of Jesus’ grief this week and we say to ourselves: this is for me. Even if I were the only person in the world, he would have done it. He did it for me. We kiss the crucifix and we say: for me, thank you Jesus, for me.

When all seems lost, when there is no longer anyone because they strike “the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered” (Matthew 26:31), it is then that God intervenes with the power of the Resurrection. Jesus’ Resurrection is not the happy ending of a beautiful fable, it is not the happy end of a film, but it is the intervention of God the Father when human hope is shattered. In the moment in which everything seems to be lost, in the moment of grief in which many persons feel the need to come down from the cross, it is the moment closest to the resurrection. The night becomes darker in fact before the morning begins, before the light begins. God intervenes in the darkest moment and resuscitates.

Jesus, who chose to pass through this life, calls us to follow him on his same way of humiliation. When in certain moments of life we find some way to come out of our difficulties, when we sink into the thickest darkness, it is the moment of our humiliation and total stripping, the hour in which we experience that we are fragile and sinners. It is in fact then, in that moment, that we must not mask our failure, but open ourselves confidently to hope in God, as Jesus did. Dear brothers and sisters, it will do us good this week to take the cross in hand and kiss it a lot, a lot and to say: thank you, Jesus, thank you, Lord. So be it.

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Speaker:

Dear Brothers and Sisters: The Gospel of this Wednesday of Holy Week presents the betrayal of Judas, which marks the beginning of Christ’s Passion. Out of love for us, Jesus freely walked the path of humiliation and self-abandonment for our salvation. As Saint Paul says, “he emptied himself… and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross” (Phil 2:7-8). As we contemplate Jesus in his passion, we see reflected the sufferings of all humanity and we discover God’s answer to the mystery of evil, suffering and death. He gives us his Son, who dies humiliated, betrayed, abandoned and reviled.

Yet God’s victory shines forth in what appears, in human terms, to be failure and defeat. Jesus’ passion is the culmination of his revelation of the Father’s infinite love and his summons to faith in his word. Christ takes upon himself the power of evil in order to set us free: “by his wounds we have been healed” (cf. 1 Pet 2:24). This week, as we follow Jesus along the way of the cross, may we imitate his loving obedience to the will of the Father, especially in times of difficulty and humiliation, and open our hearts to his gifts of reconciliation, redemption and new life.