

REMEMBERING GOOD FRIDAY

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More than two thousand years ago the first Good Friday was celebrated in the city of Jerusalem. Thousands and thousands of families gathered in their homes at sundown to eat the roast lamb, the bitter herbs, and the wine and bread of the Passover feast. Almost everyone in Jerusalem was filled with joy, for Passover was a time when the Jewish people celebrated the freedom the Lord had given them when He led them out of Egypt.

The Lord, too, celebrated this wonderful feast with His disciples, to show them that it had long served as a means of joining the minds of men and women to heaven. From the beginning this feast had a powerful correspondence, that is, a powerful connection with angels living in the spiritual world. People, however, had turned away from the Lord. To show that Passover was intended to be a holy feast, and that there was truth in it, the Lord celebrated it with His disciples. He wanted them to love it and celebrate it, so that they would think about Him. He said, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15).

The Lord had been preparing His disciples for a great sadness that would come. He knew that that very night He would be arrested and cruelly treated by the scribes and the priests and the Pharisees. And the next day He would be put to death. He wanted His disciples to think about His Word. So when the Lord had finished the Passover feast, He introduced a new celebration, called the Holy Supper. He took unleavened bread, broke it and passed it to His disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body" (Mark 14:13). "Do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19). Then He took wine in a goblet, and said, "This is My blood of the new covenant which is shed for many" (Mark 14:24). Then He passed it to all His disciples, and they drank. And after singing a hymn, they went out.

They went together, down through the streets of the city and out the east gate, into the garden of Gethsemane. Their journey took them up the side of the Mount of Olives. There the Lord sat down with His disciples. After a few moments He got up and went a little bit further into the garden. His disciples could see Him ahead. But as they were very tired, they soon fell asleep. The Lord was completely alone as He prayed saying, "Father... not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42).

The Lord was not praying to someone else. He was praying to the love that was within Him. He was reaching out to the love in Himself for the whole human race. For He knew that the human race and the hells had turned against Him. More than anything else, the Lord loved the human race and wanted to save it. So He prayed that all people might repent and turn again to Him and love Him, ceasing their hatred.

But when it grew very dark a band of soldiers and scribes and Pharisees and priests came with torches, and Judas kissed the Lord to identify Him. They took hold of the Lord and dragged Him away to the house of the high priest, Caiaphas. Just before they took Him, the Lord said to them, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you daily in

the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Luke 22:52-53).

The Lord knew that the true darkness that comes into people’s minds and clouds their sight is from hell. The real darkness from which these people were blinded was not the physical night but the false ideas of evil loves that darken the understanding and keep people from seeing the Lord. The Lord was not so much concerned with the scribes and the Pharisees who wanted to kill Him, but He thought of the hells that had taken hold of their minds. They were the real danger. The hells wanted to destroy the Lord and to destroy heaven by taking hold of people’s minds. That is the darkness of which the Lord spoke. This is the blindness that turns men and women away from seeing the Lord.

The Lord is in His Word. If you read His Word, He will speak to you and help you. Suppose, however, that a blindfold is put over your eyes. Though you look at the Word you see only darkness. You would never know the Lord or hear His teachings. Evil spirits do exactly this. They reach into your mind and, with the love of self acting like a blindfold, they close your spiritual eyes. So even though you read the truth with your natural eyes, your spiritual eyes pay no attention. In this way evil spirits turn you away from the Lord.

How could the hells destroy the Lord? Only by taking hold of people’s minds and turning them against Him. So the hells worked through the scribes and the Pharisees and the priests. They came and took hold of the Lord and later spit on Him, and hit Him with a stave, and put a torn robe on Him, and made fun of Him, calling Him King of the Jews. They put a cruel thorn crown on His head so that blood went down over His brow. They were doing these things because the hells were working through them. But they could not destroy the Lord. No one would have acted that way by himself. The hells, however, controlled their minds, and filled them with darkness. They became the tools of the hells, instead of the tools of the Lord. So the Lord pitied them and sorrowed because of their blindness and hate.

The hells tried to make the Lord feel anger toward the people—anger that would make Him curse them perhaps, or bring fire down from heaven to destroy them. But if the Lord had shown any such desire to get even, He would have lost His battle against the hells. He would have failed in His Divine mission to save humankind. The hells had even risen up and excited the angels. Imagine! Evil spirits had even caused angels to doubt and question whether the Lord could save the human race. This doubt brought terrible pain and discouragement to the Lord inwardly. But the hells had no power over Him. Even in the midst of the terrible pain the people inflicted upon Him on the cross, the Lord said, “Forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34). Such tender, forgiving love and mercy on the Lord’s part made it impossible for the hells to take hold of Him or persuade Him to do anything evil. This was the powerful victory that the Lord won. He did not allow the hells to take hold of His mind and put hatred therein.

Finally, just before He died, the Lord spoke from the cross, saying, “Father, into Your hands I commend My Spirit” (Luke 23:46). This meant that the Lord had not given His spirit, or His spiritual body, or His life to the hells, but to the Lord alone, to His own love. For by “the Father” is meant the Lord’s love for the human race. He felt no anger or urge to get back at them. He felt

only love and mercy. He spoke only truth, and the hells were unable to stand it. So He gave up His spirit into the hands of love, His own love, rather than giving up anything to the hells.

In this way the Lord broke the power of the evil spirits. They had to retreat back into the hells where they are forever bound up by their own selfishness. That is how the Lord saved the human race—by His victory in which His Divine love and mercy overcame the love of self and the world in the hells.

Good Friday is called Good Friday because of the good work the Lord accomplished. Let us celebrate Good Friday by not allowing the hells to influence us. Let us remember the Lord's words when He said, "This is My body" and "This is My blood... which is shed for many." By the body of the Lord is meant His love, and by the blood is meant His truth. When the Lord's love and truth are in us, then evil spirits must leave us and go back into hell. This is how the Lord saves each one of us now.

Whenever we are tempted by the hells to feel anger and hatred against others, let us remember the Lord's own words, "Forgive them for they do not know what they do." When we are tempted to doubt that there is a heaven or that the Lord's providence is with us, let us remember that He created us for heaven. And He says to all of us, "Today you will be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Finally, when our life here is over, let us say with all our hearts, "Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit," so that our spiritual bodies can rise up into heaven and live in the presence of the Lord's love forever.