

Meeting of the Friends of TjE - Zoom on 14 November 2020

Prayer in the evening - excerpt (*introductory text by Herbert Lauenroth, Ottmaring*)

The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in loving devotion. The Lord is good to all; His compassion rests on all He has made (Ps 145, 8-9).

The words of the psalmist lead us into this space of God; a God who wants to be recognized and implored in all his passion, his com-*passion*, patience and mercy, in the fidelity of his love – a Creator of all his creatures and of all creation - , which is always a “faithful creativity”, a “faithfulness in the future”.

Let us stand around that frail man, clothed in white, who looks somewhat lost in that immense St Peter’s Square, which was completely empty, under an insistent rain that came down on that Friday evening of March 27. Together with him let us look at the “Eternal City”, which, albeit marvellous, seems empty, abandoned, and closed in its historical sites, in its monuments, mausoleums, museums, homes, palaces, places of worship, streets and squares. All empty. Let’s stand around that one man clothed in white, whom we recognize as to be the Bishop of Rome, and therefore, our brother; that evening, however, he was also: a shepherd without his flock, “a last man standing”. Together with him, let’s give visibility to communion in Christ; together with him, let’s beseech the Real Presence of the Lord: in the midst of our communities, the various denominations, nations and as members of ethnic and cultural realities; in our midst, in the midst of humanity, and by doing so, let us, together with Pope Francis “bless” –“*urbi et orbi*” – the city of Rome and all the cities, our Countries and the whole of Europe, a Europe that is concerned with the entire world.

Yes, let us stand around the Bishop of Rome, whom we recognize as our brother, and pushed by the COVID-19 experience, let us give visibility to the **Christian Community**, a community that in this time of pandemic is characterized as an experience of a **Co-Immunity**; a communion that comes about - paradoxically – from the regulations and experiences of “**social distancing**”. At a time of enhanced global communion, this crisis brutally reminds us of the necessity to consolidate our interiority, our belonging to our own Church, family, vocation and personal history – without, however, closing ourselves inside our own homes or in our own identity. It is only thus that we can rediscover our true roots, our common belonging: that of being brothers and sisters, all equal for the fact that we are unique, intimately linked and yet completely distinct from each other: we are all brothers and sisters - in Christ!

Let us, therefore, gather around as a praying community so as to resound the words of Pope Francis, and to give them meaning and efficiency; words addressed to God, in the name of the people of God, through Jesus, through Jesus in our midst, through Jesus forsaken by the Father, whose mercy and com-*passion* were highlighted by the words of the psalmist.

The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in loving devotion. The Lord is good to all; His compassion rests on all He has made (Ps 145, 8-9).

Lord, have mercy.

You speak to us through the pandemic. We must stay at home, isolated, helpless, and yet, you bind us more than ever together and in You. We are in the same boat with You.

Lord, you invite us to consider this time of trial as a *time of choice*. It's not the time of your judgement, but ours: it's the time for us to choose between what counts and what passes, to separate what is really necessary from what's not. It's the time to redirect the route of our life toward You, Lord, and toward our neighbours.

Lord, have mercy.

Doctors, nurses, supermarket employees, cleaners, caregivers, providers of 2 transport, law and order forces, volunteers, priests, religious men and women and so very many others who have understood that no one reaches salvation by themselves. In the face of so much suffering, where the authentic development of our peoples is assessed, we experience the priestly prayer of Jesus: "That they may all be one" (Jn 17:21).

Lord, have mercy.

How many people every day are exercising patience and offering hope, taking care to sow not panic but a shared responsibility. How many fathers, mothers, grandparents and teachers are showing our children, in small everyday gestures, how to face up to and navigate a crisis by adjusting their routines, lifting their gaze and fostering prayer. How many are praying, offering and interceding for the good of all. Prayer and quiet service: these are our victorious weapons.

Lord, have mercy.

We are not self-sufficient; by ourselves we founder: we need the Lord, like ancient navigators needed the stars. Let us invite Jesus into the boats of our lives. Let us hand over our fears to him so that he can conquer them. Like the disciples, we will experience that with him on board there will be no shipwreck. Because this is God's strength: turning to the good everything that happens to us, even the bad things. He brings serenity into our storms, because with God life never dies.

Lord, have mercy.

The Lord awakens so as to reawaken and revive our Easter faith. We have an anchor: by his cross we have been saved. We have a rudder: by his cross we have been redeemed. We have a hope: by his cross we have been healed and embraced so that nothing and no one can separate us from his redeeming love. In the midst of isolation when we are suffering from a lack of tenderness and chances to meet up, and we experience the loss of so many things, let us once again listen to the proclamation that saves us: he is risen and is living by our side

Lord, have mercy.

The Lord asks us from his cross to rediscover the life that awaits us, to look towards those who look to us, to strengthen, recognize and foster the grace that lives within us. Let us not quench the wavering flame (cf. Is 42:3) that never falters, and let us allow hope to be rekindled.

Lord, have mercy.

Embracing his cross means finding the courage to embrace all the hardships of the present time, abandoning for a moment our eagerness for power and possessions in order to make room for the creativity that only the Spirit is capable of inspiring. It means finding the courage to create spaces where everyone can recognize that they are called, and to allow new forms of hospitality, fraternity and solidarity. By his cross we have been saved in order to embrace hope and let it strengthen and sustain all measures and all possible avenues for helping us protect ourselves and others. Embracing the Lord in order to embrace hope: that is the strength of faith, which frees us from fear and gives us hope.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, may you bless the world, give health to our bodies and comfort our hearts. You ask us not to be afraid. Yet our faith is weak and we are fearful. But you, Lord, will not leave us at the mercy of the storm. Tell us again: "Do not be afraid" (Mt 28:5). And we, together with Peter, "cast all our anxieties onto you, for you care about us" (cf. 1 Pet 5:7).