

---

## TAKING TIME TO REFLECT ON THE PASSION

---



The Easter Triduum we are invited to deeply experience, this year, will help remind us of everything human which Jesus experienced, about which he has asked us to do in his memory. He will remind us of the new meaning given to our suffering; he shall also have us partake in the great mystery of our faith. But for this to happen, ours must be the same sentiments that were in Christ Jesus.

### THE TABLE SET

It's a funny thing that Jesus tells his disciples to go to the upper chamber to prepare what is needed for the Passover: « *Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him.* » [Mark 14:13] A strange way to start the Passover, by introducing into the ritual a new gesture, a washing of feet, even to the most headstrong one. « *Unless I was your feet, you have no share with me.* » [John 13:8b] There was certainly something different, coming up. That a Master and Lord start washing feet was something unheard of, a service never rendered before. Announcing a new way of exercising authority and power, and of forming community, this was totally new. Begging their pardon, we could say of the Apostles that their feet were probably not gleaming with cleanliness, and beyond the smells there was something even more difficult to endure: Jesus had just foretold to his friends that he would be betrayed: « *One of you will betray me.* » [John 13:21b] Judas left immediately come nightfall, at a time powerful with prayer and communion. « *I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'* And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.' » [Luke 22:15a, 19-20]

### ENDLESS AFFRONTS

It is important that we continue our meditation. Who then is God, to love us this way? John Littleton's [French] song *Gethsemani* gives us insight into the prayerful and frightening hours. Filled with anxiety and distress, Jesus prayed as no one had ever prayed before, and his sweat became like great drops of blood. Luke, the doctor-evangelist, is the one who provided this information. Movies on the Passion of Jesus - even the movie *Jesus of Nazareth* - cannot adequately portray the tragic struggle of darkness and hatred against light and love, nor all the horror of the endless affronts made to Jesus, his loneliness and distress from Gethsemani to Calvary, from the moment of his heroic praying while his disciples slept, they who could not keep watch with him, even after Jesus had alerted them of imminent betrayal. Arrest, Peter's denial, corrupt trial, flogging, exhibition before a turbulent and spiteful crowd, stripping of clothes, carrying of the cross, a symbol of violent death, according to Roman custom, exhausting march, abandonment by his friends except Mary his mother and John his beloved disciple, nailing to the cross, crucifixion between two thieves, even the feeling of having been abandoned by the Father Himself: « *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* » [Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34] Still, Jesus entirely submitted to the Father.

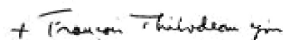
## HE HAS DEFEATED DEATH

Following the earthquake the soldier keeping watch took fright and exclaimed, « *Truly this man as God's Son!* » [Matthew 27:54] When all the crowd who had gathered there for the spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. [Luke 23:48] And then when everything was over the body of Jesus was laid in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb and soldiers were posted to guard it, for fear that the one whom the high priests considered an imposter would rise from the dead. It is important to dwell on the descent of Jesus into the bowels of the earth, to the place of the dead. Everything seemed to be over with. A total defeat, according to some. A totally failed mission, according to others. But then, following the Sabbath, at daybreak on the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb and found it empty... And then Jesus appears to her and tells her to go tell the good news to the others. He appears in different guises to his Apostles, to the eleven while they were at table, to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, to Thomas, to Saul, to a vast number of his disciples. This is the Great News, the Great Mystery: Jesus is risen from the dead!

## THE NEWS

From the very day of Pentecost, once the Spirit is given to the Apostles, the Resurrection became the very heart of apostolic preaching because in the Resurrection is revealed the very basis of the Christian faith. The Easter message is a witness to the fact that Jesus was crucified and died, but God raised him. And this resurrection of Jesus is the very basis of our own resurrection on the last day. Jesus revealed that he was « the resurrection and the life, » [John 11:25a] and that those who believe in him, even though they die, will live. [ibid.] May this 1998 Easter Triduum refocus our gaze on Jesus. As we near the new millennium let us often reflect on the meaning of the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Closely associated to him, buried with him in the waters of baptism, we are also raised to life with him because we have believed in the power of God who raised him from the dead. The new life into which we entered is the life of the risen Jesus. Along with St. Paul I repeat to you all: « *Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead... the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. The saying is sure: 'If we have died with him, we will also lie with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him.* » [2 Timothy 2:8-12] In him are our sorrows, our joys, our love. In him is all grace, in him is our peace, our glory, our salvation.

Happy Easter!



+ François Thibodeau

Bishop of Edmundston

« From A Bishop's Journal » (220) (08 April 1998)