

Mk 14:1-15:47 This is How God Loves [Palm Sunday]

Below the cross you stand. Alone. Under the spell of God's infinite love. Tears fill your eyes. You would turn away, but the cross compels you to look upon it; as foretold by the prophet: *They will look upon me whom they have pierced and they will weep* (Zach 12:10).

What have we done to you O Lord, who we should have loved and adored?

The Word became flesh, looked into our eyes as a child, and lived among us (Jn 1:14). We saw the great love that lives in Him when he healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, drove out demons, and raised the dead.

At first, we welcomed You with palm branches and shouts of joy. But when You gave Yourself to us, we chose Barabbas. We gave you no crown of glory but a crown of thorns. And we cried out: *crucify him!*

With three spikes (our sins) we nailed you to that cross. So, from your hands and feet blood trickled down the wood of that cross. Because only the blood of God would take away our sins.

On that cross, You endured the night of God's anger—the terrible agony of God having abandoned You. And yet You still cried out for His mercy: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* (Mk 15:34).

Because we broke your heart. Because despite the cross and suffering, souls will still perish.

Below the cross you stand. Covered in His blood. And filled with the deepest agony—that Jesus Christ died for you.

This is the revelation of love. This is how God loves.

Do you know why this is so important? Because in our everyday struggles we need a great heart—a loving heart, a patient heart, a faithful heart, a heart willing to sacrifice.

We can have that—only if we truly know how much God loves us.

I have a question: If Jesus is God, how is it possible that God suffered? If God is perfect, then He cannot suffer, can He?

But God is love. And in order to love, you must be willing to suffer. It means making somebody else more important than you are. It means allowing yourself to be vulnerable so that somebody else can break your heart.

So, in order to love us, God became vulnerable—to suffer when we suffer, and to suffer when we break His heart--with our sins.

I have another question: How can Jesus, who is God, be forsaken by God?

Jesus, God the Son, suffered when He took on our sins and He was forsaken by God.

God the Father suffered--forsaken, when He surrendered God the Son for us. Like St. Paul said: *[God the Father] did not spare his own Son but handed Him over [to death] for us all* (Rom 8:32).

Think about that. What a perfect example of what Jesus taught: *Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you* (Mt 5:44).

On that cross, God the Son said: *Father, forgive them, [for] they know not what they do* (Lk 23:34). And on that cross, God the Father handed Him over to death, so that His enemies, a sinful and godless people, might be saved.

So on that cross, God the Son surrendered His life for us. And on that cross, God the Father surrendered His fatherhood...He surrendered His Son for us.

And from that mutual surrender and boundless love, came forth the Holy Spirit which forgives us our sins, fills us with love, and will raise us up into a new life—not only when we die, but in our lives right now.

So as we enter Holy Week, let us focus not so much on the suffering of Jesus, but rather on the love He has for us. Because in His suffering, Jesus speaks to us about love in three ways.¹

¹ Mark Link, SJ 1990. Illustrated Sunday Homilies, Year A, Series II, p29-30.

First, Jesus' suffering is a sign of love. It shows us how much He loves us: *No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends* (Jn 15:13).

Second, Jesus' suffering is an *invitation* for us to: *Love one another as I love you* (Jn 15:12).

And third, Jesus' suffering is a *revelation* about love: *Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me* (Mk 8:34).

He gave us a great example at the Last Supper, when he wrapped a towel around himself, got on his knees and washed the disciples' feet: *If I therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet* (Jn 13:14).

Let us pray: Lord Jesus teach us to love as you love us. May we show the world by what we say and do, that You love us, that we should love one another, and that love requires our sacrifice.