

with the compassion of the women who followed Jesus and with the calm strength of his mother, Mary.

HOLY SATURDAY

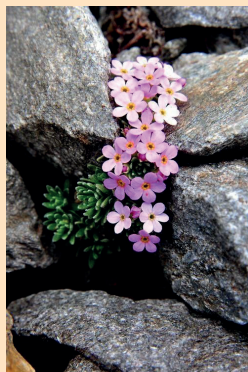
A great silence encompasses the earth. By entering into the shadows of death, the Son of God descended into the depths of the abyss of existence. Those who followed Jesus at first viewed the cross as the tragic end of life and hope and love. An unacceptable failure! The triumph of sin and evil that led to the absurd death of the one who only did good. That could not be the end of the one whom the Father promised to raise up, empowering him to overcome all that is evil. On this holy night, light breaks through the darkness, glory and praise break the silence, loneliness becomes communion, beauty and goodness blossom forth, life is clothed in all its splendor. The Risen Christ opens to us the door of eternal love, of endless peace, of hope that does not deceive, of final victory. In the light of faith, the darker the night, the more promising is the dawn of the new day. Nothing better than to hear this paschal proclamation of Vincent: *may we live an utterly new divine life in Jesus Christ, risen from the dead. Let us ask him for this grace for all of us so that we may constantly long for and aspire after the things that are above, and that we may proceed in that direction through the works of our vocation so as to draw others with us to heaven* (CCD:VIII:325).

EASTER SUNDAY

*We believe in you, Lord Jesus Christ,
you who gave us the gift of life.
We believe that now risen,
you live eternally in the glory of the Father
and, through the power of your Spirit,
you accompany us in our hesitations
as we walk in the midst of clouds and light.*

*Your resurrection is a newness that never ages,
the extended hand that raises us up,
the balm that heals our wounds,
the comfort that calms us,
the breeze that dries our tears,
the melody that enchants us,
the peace that reinvigorates us,
the fragrance that perfumes the world,
the definitive word of love.*

*Today, our only request
is for the grace to live with you,
consoled by your company,
comforted by your friendship,
which shine forth as the new light of the resurrection,
shine forth in us and in our surroundings
until the eternal light in which you dwell
breaks apart the darkness of our night
and becomes a new dawning day.
Amen. Alleluia.*



Fr. Vinícius Augusto Teixeira, CM



Live Holy Week with Saint Vincent de Paul

Holy Week is a time during which the Church offers us the opportunity to deepen our relationship with the Lord Jesus through the contemplation and the celebration of the Paschal mystery. The purpose of all of this is to become like Jesus (Galatians 4:19) and thus become inserted into the fruitful dynamic of Jesus' life which was offered up for love. Vincent spoke about this reality when he stated: *I beg Our Lord that we may be able to die to ourselves in order to rise with him, that he may be the joy of our heart, the end and soul of our actions, and our glory in heaven. This will come to pass if, from now on, we humble ourselves as he humbled himself, if we renounce our own satisfaction to follow him by carrying our little crosses, and if we give our lives willingly, as he gave his, for our neighbor whom he loves so much and whom he wants us to love as ourselves* (CCD:III:616).

Here we present a brief summary of the spiritual meaning of each day of Holy Week so that we might live these days enlightened by the Word of God, nourished by the Liturgy and inspired by Vincentian spirituality. The mature fruit that we hope to harvest is that of an increased conformity to Jesus Christ, evangelizer of the poor who invites us to envision new signs of the

resurrection in the midst of the dark nights of our present history.

PALM SUNDAY

We begin Holy Week with palms in our hand as we acclaim: *Blessed is he who come in the name of the Lord*, humble, stripped, calm, determined to lay down his life in love, in a gesture of true freedom (Luke 19:28-40). That is why Jesus remained silent before his accusers: his defense was his own fidelity and integrity, the coherence between his words and actions. The Father knew him and sustained him. From Jesus, the Messiah/Savior, we learn that there is nothing more important than a right conscience and a generous heart because life increases and matures to the degree that it is given to others as gift. It was for this reason that Saint Vincent stated: *the more we are like Our Lord, stripped of everything, the more we will share in his spirit* (CCD:VIII:175).

MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Nearing Jerusalem and feeling the weight of persecution, Jesus pauses in Bethany where he is warmly received by friends (John 12:1-11) who are not afraid of the present dangers. They learned to be free like the Teacher, free to love and to serve. The silent and bold gesture of Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, reminds Jesus of the anointing he received from the Father ... Jesus is comforted by the balm and the fragrance of a pure and sincere love. Judas, however, is motivated by self-interest. The Son of God continues his journey. The seed that has been sown will not be lost and that seed will continue to produce fruit in the lives of those who freely give themselves to others in the freedom of love. The Father will know what to do. Vincent wants us to become true friends of Christ: *I ask Our Lord to be the life of our life and the only inspiration of our hearts* (CCD:VI:576). Only in that way will we become authentic missionary-disciples.

TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

More and more the night encompassed Jesus ... there are hints of betrayal which baffled the disciples (John 13-21-33, 36-38). Judas, loved and chosen, allowed himself to be overwhelmed by evil, separated himself from the Lord and the brothers and did what he had planned. Peter at first appeared to be courageous, but soon thereafter denied knowing the One whom he had previously said he would die for. The beloved disciple remained reclining on Jesus' chest, attempting to scrutinize his heart. In the midst of all of this Jesus is recognized as the One glorified by the Father and is prepared to glorify the Father ... a glory of love which is not negated by the infidelity and the denials of his disciples, a glory that achieves fullness in the laying down of his life. We know: applauded or rejected, nothing is more necessary than *to live and act as Our Lord did so that his spirit may be apparent in all our ministries* (CCD:XII:93).

WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Today, in many ecclesial communities, this is the day of encounter between the suffering Lord and the sorrowful Mother, encounter between a love that is offered and a love that strengthens. What can be said about our encounters: do they communicate peace? Do they instill hope? Do they create joy? Do we know how to reach out to others in their time of need and suffering? What do we offer others when we reach out to them? Is our presence inspiring? Are our words comforting? Do our gestures encourage? Let us learn from today's encounter in which Jesus' faithfulness was reinvigorated by the compassion of his Mother. Pope Francis teaches us that *the revolution of tenderness* cannot be accomplished without a *culture of encounter*. Therefore, like Mary *let us clothe ourselves in the spirit of Jesus Christ so that his steps become the rule of our life as we journey toward perfection*.

HOLY THURSDAY

Today we recall the institution of the Eucharist, the sacrament of love which becomes service (John 13:1-15). During the Last Supper, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, revealing a new dimension of his mystery and of the dynamic of love which should distinguish his followers: to reach out to others and to accompany others in order to become like the Lord and Master. The ministry of the priests (the institution of which we also recall today) should be viewed from that perspective. The priest is a human being who loves and serves, a poor person who enriches others, a sinner who reconciles others because nothing that he has received can be retained for himself. His life is gift, bread that is broken, a prolongation of the Eucharist because *Jesus willed to place in us the seed of love, which is our resemblance to him* (CCD:XI:131).

GOOD FRIDAY

Today, we do not have to multiply words as we contemplate the passion and the death of the Lord. Love, which became service in the washing of feet, is now handed over on the cross (John 18:1-19, 42). This is done freely in order to tell us that we have been reconciled and saved by an infinite love. The Crucified took upon himself our pain and suffering and anguish and hope ... nothing was left unredeemed. Since then, no one should feel abandoned or alone: *we can be sure that God will grant us the grace to carry our cross constantly, to follow Jesus Christ closely, and to live like him in time and in eternity* (CCD:XII:186). Through his death, Jesus entered into our loneliness scattered the clouds of darkness and fear. Today, let us place ourselves at the foot of the cross with Mary, his mother and with those who remained faithful to the end. As we contemplate Jesus crucified, let us become aware of all that we have received and of all that we must do in order to respond to so great a love. May we learn to place ourselves beside those who are crucified today and we do so with the solidarity of Simon of Cyrene,