

Reflections

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The Best of Jesus' gifts: His Mother

We are going to speak about the best of Jesus' gifts to humanity. He who has nothing and is naked on the cross, still possesses something enormous: a mother, and He desires to give her to us.

St. John tells us of this episode (JN 19, 25-27), and with psychological sharpness, he places it immediately after the narration of the dividing of his vestments and the drawing of lots for his tunic. Without saying it, John is explaining to us that that tunic was made by the mother of Jesus and that it is precisely the drawing of lots which brings to mind memories in the head of the dying person. It urges Him to fix his attention on the group of friends who are keeping watch at the foot of the cross.

At this hour, the curious ones have left. A great number of enemies have also left. Only remaining are the soldiers keeping watch and the small group of faithful.

The apostles have fled. Even Peter, who because of fear or perhaps more probably because of shame for his betrayal, is also not here. To the embarrassment of the men, the group is mainly made up of women, with the exception of John, the youngest of the clan of fishermen and in whom love has been greater than fears and doubts.

The center of the group is made up of Mary, the mother of the dying person. Other women are at her side. "The Evangelist says that standing close to Jesus' cross were his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene." We already know who this last woman was: the woman from whom, according to St. Luke, seven demons had been driven out (8,2), and surely she was the same woman who, according to the same Evangelist, we saw drying the feet of Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee. She is also probably the sister of Lazarus who was raised from the dead. We know they were standing by the cross

Perhaps it was Jesus Himself who at that moment motioned to them to come near because He had something important to tell them.

In reality, there was no law which kept the relatives from approaching the condemned. The soldiers guarded the crosses in case of a possible riot or to help prevent any type of uproar, but they did not remove the curious, nor the enemies, nor the friends. Truthfully, there was little to fear from that small group of women and a boy. The same soldiers had to have compassion for that prisoner for whom at the hour of truth, few allies had remained.

We also know that they "were" standing next to the Cross, and that "were" in Latin tells us clearly that they remained standing, that they remained firm. That Mary could have a fainting moment enters into the human condition. That she would be supported by John is normal in a mother. But for certain, what Jesus saw from the cross was not a fainting woman. Torn apart by pain, She was there totally, awake to assume the tremendous legacy which would be entrusted to Her.

He denies Her nothing. The presence of Mary at that moment is certainly mysterious. From the human and sentimental point of view, it was cruel to have her taken there. It was cruel for the both of them. The presence of the mother at the cross was a double source: source of sweetness and of pain.

For Christ, it had to have been comforting to feel accompanied by her, to see from the Cross the first most pure fruit of his work of redemption. But it was also a source of enormous pain to see His mother suffer. When He who loves discovers the echo of his own suffering in the beloved, He feels new regions of his heart torn apart. On the other hand, I think that seeing his mother suffer so much is the reason why Jesus denies Her nothing.

Questions for reflection

1. Is the Virgin a mother for me?
2. Which is my favorite prayer to the Virgin?
3. What can I do to be more attached to Mary?

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