

COMMUNIO IN CHRISTO

*Our Life -
Our Works*

Digital Spiritual Letter No. 26, February 15th 2024

Theme:

Delving into the Mission of Christ SEAT IN LIFE

The following reflection by Mother Marie Therese is part of her passion reflections “Testimony for the redeemer” that she wrote during lent season in 1993. Each year during lent she produced a series of such reflections starting on the first Sunday of lent and finishing with the resurrection of Christ on Easter Vigil.

These texts are special as Mother Marie Therese experienced herself and suffered herself all she wrote. She does not write only about the sufferings of Jesus in the role of an outside observer, but she emotionally and physically relives the sufferings of Jesus, each year with a growing intensity. It started already in her childhood. She always became seriously ill during lent and during Holy week it was worst. In the brochure “The way I experience the passion of Christ - Writings from 1989”, she writes: “My soul experiences the saddest and most distressing hours of Jesus in Getsemani. I feel a strange pressure in my chest as if a heavily loaded truck had weighed it down... In every Holy Week, I realize anew that I live what has been revealed to me, so that many may find the way back to the cross” (pp. 11, 14). Astonishingly the pressure disappeared when the Liturgy of Good Friday was over.



May this year’s period of lent help us discover anew and intensively the value that the cross of Jesus has for the redemption in our life and that there is no Easter without Good Friday. In this spirit, I wish all of you a fruitful time of preparation for the Feast of the Resurrection of our Saviour!

Jaison Thazhathil, Superior General



REFLECTION OF MOTHER MARIE THERESE

March 1st 1993

You have to experience human fear and misery in order to know what the agonies of conscience mean. You have to be acquainted with the life history of a person in order to know what sufferings it involves if this person is translated from time.

In this hour I can delve into the mission of Christ who says of himself that he came into this world in order to save it. It is not easy to understand this sentence which surpasses the human mind. In love the certainty of our really being redeemed is fulfilled. Jesus offers me to be with him in Getsemani, on the Mount of Olives, - my favourite place for reflection.

He had the power over this world. The reality of this meeting shows the enslavement caused by the narrowness of the law which he opposes in order to fulfil the law in love. In order to discern the significance of this new approach and to comprehend the revelation of the whole truth it is necessary to be familiar with all customs and traditions. You have to rejoice in the Second Vatican Council in rapt attention in order to fulfil the hope for which this world craves.

Jesus is thrown to the ground. In him there is the full measure of human guilt, in him there is the unimaginable degree of the divine punishment, in him there is the desire for satisfaction, the thirst for reconciliation and redemption. Nothing meant more to him than the reconciliation with God. The inner struggle assumed such alarming aspects that he cried out: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by. Nevertheless, let it be as you, not I, would have it."
(Mt 26:39)

Nothing has ever given me more consolation than his words: "Listen, the time will come, indeed it has come already... I have told you all this, so that you may find peace in me. In the world you will have hardship, but be courageous, I have conquered the world." (Jn 16:32,33) In him the friend is suffering. We ought to be overwhelmed with sadness. We do not understand him. We form an opinion about him or look at him with a stranger's eyes. And yet I experience the mystery of the consolation, the presence of a friend for eternity. The shattered friendship, my inner frantic seeking finds God's affection.

I experience the enormous consolation for the whole world, the friendship that does not forsake us even in the abyss of our existence. The tremendous fear, the terrible sweats and that fearful cry are signs of the struggle for something great. In the very depth of my soul I experience the unity of wills with my Father, with a love that says to me:

"You shall live to all eternity regardless of what you are or what you have done to me, your God. I will take you into the beyond and protect you from any threat. I do not want you to be dragged into eternal death. I do not want you to be pressed into the narrowness of the law. I do not allow your despair to make you forget my love."



Oh, how important it is to see the Passion in the right light, to personally experience the intensive suffering so that the full measure of hope may become apparent in an intimate friendship. People do not realize that it is possible to protect a truth that is exposed to extreme pressure. The Beatitudes turn into life: Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (compare Mt 5:4,6,10)

Here, in Getsemani, the revelation of the incarnation of God grows, it is here that I experience the fragility of an impotence that rises to love and makes Jesus so real for us in the cry. My heart is seized by a sadness that calls a memory to my mind, filled with the



deep longing for the love of God. Where was the gratitude that makes us realize what his love had been denied? Where was the admission of my nothingness, where the confrontation between God and me in which I would have to admit my being totally dependent on him? Hasn't the world up to this day failed to shed its arrogance and to consider all fame and honour as unjustified? Can we, who have never been hungry, ill or forsaken comprehend the fear, misery and despair he must have felt?

The mental agony and fear Jesus felt mark the enormity of our guilt he is atoning for. His misery is our condemnation. His mission, the salvation of the world – he is experiencing it trembling and fearful. Until the final judgement he will see

the tragedy of human impotence and the fatal punishment of mankind. The truth is unfolding in which Satan will be conquered. Man can hope and know that Jesus became incarnate for every human being, that He has been among us ever since and that He has uplifted the old, sinful world to a new world, flourishing beyond all weakness. His death confirms this hope with a certainty that is so strong that it should encourage us to burst into gratitude and joy. I am more deeply moved by the news of my salvation than by the violence of our time. The unfolding bliss is alive and reality. I see Christ in terrible agony, which he endured for me and the whole creation. My call travels around the world. I implore you: Turn back, the Redeemer is in our midst.

I will kneel beside Christ, who permits me to speak in the name of the world: "It may be a consolation to you: We do not deserve your love." And what reply will the world get?

"You have forgotten your name. I have accepted you, and my friendship can never be deep enough. I relieve you of everything so that your eternity will hold unspeakable happiness. Go with me in contrition and gratitude, so that my love may be fulfilled in you."

In Getsemani Christ called for unity in love. Let us hear that call in great humility. Then, it will not be difficult to respond.



Father,

I can feel Your Son's prayer rising to heaven:

"Let this cup pass from me",

with which I address You.

"Your will be done" is the expression of my love for You

and of my unity with Your will.

In my suffering I am with You, my Saviour.

I promise You to shun the world,

and to avoid anything worthless and the things transient.

I promise You to strive for higher things,

to serve You and to bear witness to Your mission.

You showed me Your anguish

and allowed me to experience Your mercy in Getsemani.

More and more I desire

to go a new way,

to bear testimony from the point of view of a mystery,

to accept a new reality,

to bear witness to the truth and to You as the Redeemer,

who revealed himself to me.

I promise You to serve Your Spirit

who asked me to be his tool.

May Your workings disclose the offences within the Church,

within her, who bears the heritage of the grace of Christ.

Let her realize that she possesses the truth

but has not yet recognized it in full.

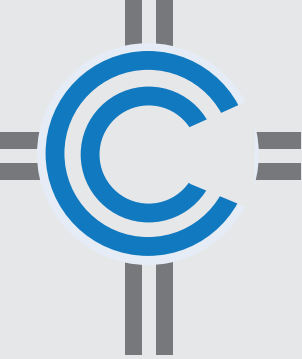
Love and fidelity are the signs of faith

in which the truth becomes complete.

I promise You, o Father,

to humbly admit my impotence

though You have chosen me



*to serve as a sign for the Holy Church.
I promise You to achieve the break-through
in deeds of devotion and works of love,
so that Your Spirit in me may become a powerful attraction.
I am longing for Your commandment to come to life,
to arouse more attention and the desire to live
as the fulfilment of the law
in accordance with Your will.
I promise You to lead a life in gratitude,
striving to add what is still missing in Your Passion,
and to bear witness to the salvation of myself and of all mankind
in word and deed,
and in accordance with Your will.
My future, the certainty of my joy,
is reason to be grateful for such great mercy,
for which I part with all things transient
for Your honour and as a thanksgiving for Your loving kindness,
so that Your love may spread
till the final meeting
in Your kingdom.*

*Taken from: Mother Marie Therese, I implore You, o Holy Church – In the name of the Spirit,
Patris Verlag GmbH 2015, pp. 185 ff.*



COMMENTARY

The Meaning of Suffering and the living value of the Cross

By Pfr. Rasso Bernadin Litaka

Dear friends, our spiritual letter in this month of February, leads us properly to the heart of the Lenten period. As it is put before us the reflection on suffering from the last book of Mother Marie Therese "I implore you o holy church - with the theme 'Witness to the Saviour'. Mother in this reflection is leading us to see the Meaning of Suffering and the living value of the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Reflecting on how Mother Marie Therese suffered in all those years, we encounter the most difficult question asked by human beings, a question believers ask God - why suffering? What is its meaning? It is a question that expresses the anguish within ourselves when we experience not only bodily pain, but also spiritual pain, in ourselves and in those whom we love. The question of all human suffering leads us ultimately to the mystery of evil.

As we reflect on Jesus Christ in Gethsemane in this Lenten season, we find the fullest source of the answer to the question of the meaning of human suffering. The answer has been given to us by God in the suffering of His Son. The answer is the cross of Jesus. The "why" of human suffering and the answer to evil can be discovered most deeply when we contemplate the love of the Father who sent His Son into the world to save us. On the cross, Jesus not only embraced human suffering in an incomparable way, but also made suffering redemptive. He conquered evil with good. He accomplished our salvation from sin and death by His own suffering on the cross. In suffering voluntarily and innocently, Christ gives the answer to the question about suffering and its meaning.

Dear friends, in this way, Jesus brings suffering into what we can call "a new dimension," the dimension of love, salvific love. The Son of God strikes evil at its very root, conquering sin and death with the power of love. "He conquers sin by His obedience unto death, and He overcomes death by His resurrection. In His passion, Jesus took all human suffering upon Himself. He gave it a new meaning. He used suffering to accomplish the work of salvation. He used it for good. His love transformed suffering so that this awful reality that is connected to evil might become a power for good. So suffering now has a saving power. And that is how we, as Christians, can find meaning and purpose in suffering, what before we might have thought was totally useless.

Mother Marie Therese realized all these in her sufferings, by finding in the sufferings of Jesus Christ the consolation, trust, forgiveness, assurance of eternity, love and salvation.

Therefore friends, Jesus has not only redeemed us from sin and death, he has also redeemed suffering. He has made it redemptive. He has made it a source and means of something good: redemption and eternal life. He accomplishes redemption through suffering. Thus each man, in his suffering, can also become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ. Here we get, as it was in Mother Marie Therese, to the very personal aspect of the question of suffering. How do we deal with it and find meaning in it and even do good through it?

St. Paul writes about this in many places in his letters, about sharing in the sufferings of Christ. He even expresses joy in sharing in the sufferings of Christ. The truth is - Christ has opened His sufferings



to us. He invites us to share in His Passion. This gives meaning to our suffering. As difficult and painful as suffering can be, it is no longer useless and meaningless. Here's how St. Paul expresses this mystery in the incredible sentence in his letter to the Colossians: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His Body, that is, the Church" (1:24). So what previously did not make any sense and caused despair, namely, suffering and pain, now can make sense and be borne with hope. There's now a power for good in suffering, the power of love. Through our union with Jesus, our sufferings can become redemptive. We can offer up our sufferings in union with Him. We can, in the words of Paul, complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His Body, the Church.

Dear friends, we might again ask the question, "what can possibly be lacking in Christ's sufferings, Christ's afflictions?" The answer is that all that is lacking is our part in them. The subtitle of the 22nd book written by Mother Marie Therese is: "What is lacking in Christ's suffering? – Our gratitude".

Yes dear friends, our sufferings can become part of Christ's work, the greatest work ever done, the work of salvation. This happens when we have faith. With faith, we offer our sufferings up to God and He uses them in a mysterious and powerful way for the redemption of the world through the power of love, the love that is the very inner life of God. So in faith, when we are suffering, we can experience, as Mother Marie Therese, an inner joy that comes from love, by offering our pain and suffering to God, with Jesus, generally for the salvation of the world and even specifically for particular people as Mother Marie Therese did. When she visited the sick and suffering, she always asked for their prayers, not just for herself, but for the Church. She believed that their prayers have a special efficacy when the suffering persons are offering their sufferings in union with Christ.

The mystery of the Redemption, which is rooted in suffering, does not end in suffering. Courage and fortitude in suffering are possible because of the resurrection. For the love of the cross is victorious.

Therefore dear friends, with all these, we even speak of the suffering of Mother Marie Therese and our suffering as a call, a vocation. Jesus is inviting everyone 'Follow me' 'Come!' Take part through your suffering in this work of saving the world, a salvation achieved through my suffering". In this Lenten period dear friends, let us find in our sufferings an interior peace and spiritual joy with His sufferings.

Pfr. Rasso Bernadin Litaka



I am Fr. Rasso Bernadin Litaka belonging to the Diocese of Mahenge in Tanzania, ordained priest on the 6 July 2002. I have worked as an assistant parish priest then as a parish priest. From 2012- 2016 I was in Rome for specialization in Church History at the Gregorian University.

During my studies in Rome I came to know Communion in Christo. I visited the Motherhouse in Mechernich several times.

After staying with Communio in Christo in the headquarters I was attracted to become a member and took my vows.

Seeing the life in there, of shearing community life, visiting the hospice, learning the charism of the Mother, all these attracted me to join.

Currently I am professor in St. Paul's senior seminary Kipalapala.

Since my arrival in the seminary, and together with my fellow priests, we are struggling to impart the charism of Mother Marie Therese to our students.



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