
JESUS IS FULL OF LIFE! (3)



In our time there are so many things that are very quickly done or carried out that we have the impression of becoming more and more indifferent, of finally reaching the end empty-handed. The fast food restaurant isn't the only example of this. Every day, many things are done very quickly, which can thwart our enjoyment of life. What I am about to share with you may seem at first sight improbable, but I believe that a command which could be crucial today would be: Take time to contemplate. And so, with all of you, but especially with our children and their parents, I want to contemplate Jesus, to look at Jesus as he gives his life for each and everyone of us.

TAKING TIME

Lovers who take time to gaze on one another, oftentimes silently, discover in one another riches they would not have seen otherwise: gentleness, depth of feeling, wisdom, beauty, goodness..., the list could be added to week after week. The mother and father who take the time to look at and contemplate their new-born child discover marvellous things and truly appreciate the wonderful gift of life, the beauty of the baby's presence, the bigness of heart and greatness of soul which surpass them both; a deep and lasting love starts growing day by day, joyful planning begins and vital bonds are created to last a lifetime. The tourist who takes the time to stop, to contemplate the rising or the setting sun, will forever remember not only the scene but also the never-to-be-experienced-again atmosphere.

A WITNESS TO CONTEMPLATION

During his pilgrimage to the Holy Land Pope John Paul II broke the strictest security measures in order to contemplate to his heart's content. At Mount Nebo from whence Moses was given a glimpse of the Promised Land, the Pope asked those in his entourage to leave him alone for a while, and for a good twenty minutes he was able to gaze at the great expanse of this Land of Happiness which God had given His people and which today is in sore need of peace. In the Grotto in Bethlehem, the Pope asked to be left alone to pray as he wished, and to ponder the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. And after leaving the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, he asked to return to this sacred place where the cross of Christ had stood and where he was placed in the tomb, to contemplate Christ in his death and resurrection. The Pope insisted on these pauses, and this is certainly why people recognise in him an uncommon pilgrim, a man of prayer, and a man of contemplation.

CONTEMPLATING JESUS

In his letter on the new millennium, Pope John Paul II gives an important directive: Contemplate the face of God, contemplate him in his earthly life, contemplate him in his public life, at prayer, in his word, his suffering, his passion, death, and resurrection. Contemplate him in his Church. Contemplate him in the poor, the suffering, the oppressed. As he ponders on the face of Jesus, the Pope writes: *"In contemplating Christ's face, we confront the most paradoxical aspect of his mystery, as it emerges in his last hour, on the Cross. The mystery before which we cannot but prostrate ourselves in adoration. The intensity of the episode in the Garden of Olives passes before our eyes. Oppressed by foreknowledge of the trials that await him, and alone*

before the Father, Jesus cries out to him in his habitual and affectionate expression of trust: 'Abba, Father!' He asks him to take away, if possible, the cup of suffering (cf. Mk. 14:36). But the Father seems not to want to hear the Son's cry. In order to bring man back to the Father's face, Jesus not only had to take on the face of man, but he had to burden himself with the 'face' of sin. 'For our sake he made him to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God' (2 Cor. 5:21).

CRY OF PAIN

We shall never exhaust the depths of this mystery. All the hardness of the paradox can be heard in Jesus' seemingly desperate cry of pain on the Cross: "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which means 'My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?' (Mk. 15:14). Is it possible to imagine a greater agony, a more impenetrable darkness? In reality, the anguished 'why' addressed to the Father in the opening of the Twenty-second Psalm expresses all the realism of unspeakable pain; but it is also illumined by the meaning of that entire prayer, in which the Psalmist brings together suffering and trust, a moving blend of emotions. In fact, the Psalm continues: 'In you our fathers put their trust; they trusted you and you set them free... Do not leave me alone in my distress, come close, there is none else to help' (Ps. 22:5, 12). Jesus' cry on the Cross, dear Brothers and Sisters, is not the cry of anguish of a man without hope, but the prayer of the Son who offers his life to the Father in love, for the salvation of all. At the very moment when he identifies with our sin, 'abandoned' by the Father, he 'abandons' himself into the hands of the Father. His eyes remain fixed on the Father."¹

VERY SIMPLE MEANS

All along the way of solidarity along the streets of Edmundston, Ste-Anne, Grand Falls and St-François, we are led to the contemplation of this great mystery of our faith: these moments of contemplation shall ever be memorable. We shall contemplate the crucified Jesus and all in our world who are crucified with him, with all who carry the cross of heavy burdens. We shall take time to contemplate the Risen Jesus, the one who gives meaning to our every pain and suffering. Far from being a failure, the death of Jesus leads to life. I congratulate all those who shall take the time, on Good Friday, to contemplate the greatest wonder in the world: the world's salvation in Jesus Christ. Let us develop the habit of contemplating Jesus often: our ancestors invented wonderful, simple and meaningful devotions. Devotion to the Way of the Cross leads us to discover in the life and Gospel of Christ, the most wonderful news. Devotion to praying the rosary invites us to discover the joyful, luminous, sorrowful, and glorious mysteries, the great mystery of our faith. What awaits us in these devotions is contemplation of Jesus at the heart of our history, of our humanity, and of the everlasting life awaiting us. It is contemplating, through simple and popular means, how *His love is from age to age*. I hope that the Easter season we shall live together leads us to the wonderful contemplation of the great mystery of our faith. If we only took the time to look, listen, and love, if we only took the time, the new creation would be born!

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1. POPE JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Inuente*, nn. 25, 26, ZENIT News Agency translation.