



The Holy See

**WORDS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
AT THE END OF THE WAY OF THE CROSS
AT THE COLOSSEUM**

Good Friday, 21 April 2000

1. “Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” (*Lk* 24:26).

These words of Jesus to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus echo deep within us this evening, at the end of the Way of the Cross at the Colosseum. Like us, they had heard talk of the events surrounding the Passion and Crucifixion of Jesus. On the way back to their village, Christ draws near as an unknown pilgrim, and they hasten to tell him everything “about Jesus..., who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people” (*Lk* 24:19), and how the chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death and how he was crucified (cf. *Lk* 24:20-21). And they conclude sadly: “But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since this happened” (*Lk* 24:21).

“We had hoped...”. The disciples are discouraged and dejected. For us too it is difficult to understand why the way of salvation should pass through suffering and death.

2. “Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” (*Lk* 24:26). Let us too ask this question at the end of the traditional Stations of the Cross at the Colosseum.

Soon, from this place sanctified by the blood of the first martyrs, we shall go away, each on our own way. We shall return home, turning over in our minds the very same events which the disciples of Emmaus were discussing.

May Jesus draw near to each one of us; may he become for us too a companion on the road! As he walks with us, he will explain that it was for our sake that he went to Calvary, for us that he died, in fulfilment of the Scriptures. Thus the sorrowful event of the Crucifixion, which we have just

meditated upon will become for each of us an eloquent lesson.

Dear Brothers and Sisters! The people of today need to meet Christ crucified and risen!

Who, if not the condemned Saviour, can fully understand the pain of those unjustly condemned?

Who, if not the King scorned and humiliated, can meet the expectations of the countless men and women who live without hope or dignity?

Who, if not the crucified Son of God, can know the sorrow and loneliness of so many lives shattered and without a future?

The French poet Paul Claudel wrote that the Son of God “has shown us the way out of suffering and the possibility of its transformation” (*Positions et propositions*). Let us open our hearts to Christ: he himself will respond to our deepest yearnings. He himself will unveil for us the mysteries of his Passion and Death on the Cross.

3. “Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him” (*Lk 24:31*). As Jesus speaks, the hearts of the two disconsolate travellers find a new serenity and begin to burn with joy. They recognize the Master in the breaking of bread.

Like them, may the people of today be able to recognize in the breaking of bread, in the mystery of the Eucharist, the presence of their Saviour. May they encounter him in the Sacrament of his Passover, and welcome him as their fellow traveller along the way. He will listen to them and bring them comfort. He will become their guide, leading them along the paths of life towards the Father’s house.

*We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
because by your holy Cross, you have redeemed the world!*

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