

# PREPARATION FOR GREATER GRACES OR SACRIFICES SPIRITUAL READING

- *Scriptural Passage* (Mt.26;36-46)

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” He took along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to feel sorrow and distress. Then he said to them, “My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch with me.” He advanced a little and fell prostrate in prayer, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will.” When he returned to his disciples he found them asleep. He said to Peter, “So you could not keep watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Withdrawing a second time, he prayed again, “My Father, if it is not possible that this cup pass without my drinking it, your will be done!” Then he returned once more and found them asleep, for they could not keep their eyes open. He left them and withdrew again and prayed a third time, saying the same thing again. Then he returned to his disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand when the Son of Man is to be handed over to sinners. Get up, let us go. Look, my betrayer is at hand.”

- *Words from Father J. Kentenich* (Summer, 1956)

What about our Lord? Our Lord arranged a special hour of suffering for us all: it is the hour in Gethsemane (Mk 14,32-42). It was a terribly hard time. We know that our Lord suffered so deeply in the depths of his soul that he did not merely sweat, but as a fully mature man he sweated blood. You can feel that he didn't play the role of a strong man, he broke down. Let us consider for a moment: what caused him to break down, really and truly, what caused him to break down also physically? We are told in the Gospels that he fell flat on the ground, he broke down. What was the suffering he experienced so deeply and inwardly? It was as though the divinity in his nature withdrew completely and allowed his human nature to drink the suffering to its last dregs. It could be that he imagined to himself what lay ahead of him, that he would be beaten, crucified and

maltreated. As we all know, much of the cross and suffering weighs far heavier beforehand than at the moment we really have to bear it.

Of course, this may have weighed heavily on him. But far heavier was the reality of all the filth accumulating through the centuries. And he took upon himself the filth of sin. He experienced this sin as though he had personally committed it all. That was why he collapsed and sweated blood. He was so truly human, he went to his apostles and begged them for a little comfort - it is all so human. And what does he find with his apostles? They were asleep, they were not interested in him. So he returned. He turned to the Father. Look at how human he was: "Father, let this chalice pass me by!" (Lk 22, 42). To whom does he turn, then? To the Father! And you may not imagine that he repeated this once, twice, three times. No, the Gospels indicate that it lasted a long time. He battled again and again with the Father: Please allow this chalice to pass me by! You see, that is a childlike and human cry to the Father. But against the same background come the majestic words: "Father, not my will, but yours be done!" (Lk 22,42). Can you understand what I am trying to say? Throughout his life, in every situation, our Lord centered on the Father.

That is the example our Lord gave his Mother. We can understand how the Mother of God became uniquely a child of the Father in and with our Lord, how she constantly centered on the father in every circumstance of her life.

- *Brief Application*

“There is no greater love than this, to give one’s life for one’s friend. You are my friends if...” (Jn 15;13). There is no greater sacrifice than to give our lives, our likes, our wants, to risk, our very selves, for the sake of others.

Suffering, in daily life, prepare us for martyrdom in times like these.

The best example of a moment of suffering that prepares the soul for greater suffering or for greater life to flow is the agony our Lord went through in the Mount of Olives.

- *Questions for reflection:*

- The last supper was a proof of mutual loyalty between our Lord and his disciples. What proof of your loyalty to our Lord do you spiritually bring this evening to the celebration of the Last Supper?
- Are you willing to embrace greater graces and sacrifices out of love?
- Out of love for whom?
- What are *your own* three key words from this retreat? Can you share them with someone?