

SANCTIFICATION

SPIRITUAL READING

- *Scriptural Passage* (Mt.27;51ff)

From noon onward, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Some of the bystanders who heard it said, "This one is calling for Elijah." Immediately one of them ran to get a sponge; he soaked it in wine, and putting it on a reed, gave it to him to drink. But the rest said, "Wait, let us see if Elijah comes to save him." But Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, and gave up his spirit. And behold, the veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth quaked, rocks were split, tombs were opened, and the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were raised. And coming forth from their tombs after his resurrection, they entered the holy city and appeared to many. The centurion and the men with him who were keeping watch over Jesus feared greatly when they saw the earthquake and all that was happening, and they said, "Truly, this was the Son of God!" There were many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him. Among them were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

- *Quote from Father Cantalamessa, 2006*

It is written that at the moment of Christ's death "the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the earth shook, and the rocks were split; the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised" (Matthew 27:51ff.). An apocalyptic explanation — symbolic language to describe the eschatological event — is usually given of these signs, but they also have a parenthetical meaning: indicating what should occur in the heart of the one who reads and meditates on the passion of Christ. St. Leo the Great writes: "Human nature trembles before the Redeemer's torture, the rocks of unfaithful hearts are split and those that were closed in the sepulchers of their mortality emerge, lifting the stone that weighed down on them." [5]

We have arrived at the point in which we must gather the fruit of the whole of our meditation on the Passion. The Bible has explained the profound meaning of the word *metanoia*, conversion, as a change of heart: "Create in me, O God, a new heart," "rend your hearts and not your garments" (Joel 2:13). Also the conversion of the crowd that heard Peter's talk is expressed through the image of the heart: "They were cut to the heart" (Acts 2:37).

Every conversion implies a movement, a passing from one state to another, from one point of departure to a point of arrival. The point of departure, a state from which one must come out is for Scripture that of the hardness of heart. "I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels" (Psalm 80:13), "For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives" (Matthew 19:8), "grieved at their hardness of heart" (Mark 3:5), "by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself" (Romans 2:5).

In the whole Bible, but especially in the New Testament, the heart indicates the seat of the interior life, as opposed to the outward appearance: "man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). The heart is man's most profound I, his very person, in particular, his intelligence and will. It is the center of the religious life, the point in which God addresses man and man decides his response to God.

- *Words from Father J. Kentenich* (January, 1942)

A new creation! What does it mean, practically speaking? It means to embody the Christian image of the human person, to make the new creation in Christ Jesus a reality. What is old has passed away. What is meant by old? The old image personified by Adam. Christ is the new Adam, the beginning of a new epoch.

What were the gifts of the old Adam? He was brilliantly endowed. I don't want to explain it again. But, but... it was followed by sin. The wonderful image which Adam and Eve were privileged to represent at the beginning of creation was suddenly disfigured. A break entered human nature. A break entered the life of the human person. The lives of Adam and Eve and the lives of all their descendants became interiorly fragmented.

The old has passed away. There will be a new image B what kind of a new image? True, this new image does not restore perfectly, it does not represent perfectly, immediately, what Adam and Eve lost. Original sin will be removed, but the consequences of original sin remain.

When we now consider the image of the Blessed Mother, we have to say and acknowledge that she was free. She remained free of original sin and the most distressing consequence of original sin, which is the inner conflict we call concupiscence, the inordinate drives and desires. Innate to her nature, as to our Lord's, were drives, but not inordinate drives. The old has passed away.

When God designed and created the Blessed Mother, he assigned a special position to her, an exceptional position, and he endowed her for this role. We are destined to resemble her, and we are striving to embody this ideal. Let us become like you! Let us walk like you through life!

- *Questions for reflection*

- Is there any weakness in my character that I would consider an obstacle to God's work in me?
- Where do I see God wanting to bring about the miracle of sanctity in me (or in my family)?
- What point(s) should I stress in the coming days in order to let God reveal his wishes and plans to us more clearly?