



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

GENERAL AUDIENCE *Saint Peter's Square*

Wednesday, 1st April 2015 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

The Easter Triduum

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning,

Tomorrow is Holy Thursday. In the afternoon, with the Mass of the Lord's Supper, we will begin the *Easter Triduum* of Christ's passion, death and resurrection, which is the culmination of the whole liturgical year and the pinnacle of our Christian life as well.

The Triduum begins with the commemoration of the Last Supper. Jesus, on the eve of his passion, offered his body and blood to the Father under the species of bread and wine and, which he gave to the Apostles as nourishment with the command that they perpetuate the offering in his memory. The Gospel of this celebration, recalling the *washing of the feet*, expresses the same meaning of the Eucharist under another perspective. Jesus — like a servant — washes the feet of Simon Peter and the other eleven disciples (cf. Jn 13:4-5). By this prophetic gesture, He expresses the meaning of his life and of his passion as service to God and to his brothers: "For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve" (Mk 10:45).

This also occurred in our Baptism, when the grace of God washed us of sin and clothed us in Christ's nature (cf. Col 3:10). This takes place every time we celebrate the memory of the Lord in the Eucharist: we enter into communion with Christ Servant by obeying his command — to love one another as He has loved us (cf. Jn 13:34; 15:12). If we approach Holy Communion without being sincerely ready to wash the feet of one another, we don't recognize the Body of the Lord. It is the service, Jesus gives himself entirely.

Then, the day after tomorrow, in the liturgy of *Good Friday* we shall meditate on the mystery of Christ's death and adore the Cross. In the final moments of his life, before giving up his spirit to the Father, Jesus said: "It is finished" (Jn 19:30). What do these words mean, when Jesus says: "It is finished"? It means that the work of salvation is finished, that all of the Scriptures have found

their total fulfillment in the love of Christ, the immolated Lamb. Jesus, by his Sacrifice, has transformed the greatest iniquity into the greatest love.

Over the course of the centuries there have been men and women who by the witness of their lives reflected a ray of this perfect love, full and undefiled. I would like to recall a heroic witness of our times, Don Andrea Santoro, a priest of the Diocese of Rome and a missionary in Turkey. A few days before being assassinated in Trebisonda, he wrote: "I live among these people so that Jesus can live among them through me... only by offering one's flesh is salvation possible. The evil that stalks the world must be borne and pain must be shared till the end in one's own flesh as Jesus did" (A. Polselli, *Don Andrea Santoro, le eredità*, Città Nuova, Rome 2008, p. 31). May the example of a man of our times, and so many others, sustain us in the offering of our own life as a gift of love to our brothers and sisters, in the imitation of Jesus.

And today too there are many men and women, true martyrs who offer up their lives with Jesus in order to confess the faith, for this motive alone. It is a service, the service of Christian witness even to the pouring out of blood, a service that Christ rendered for us: he redeemed us to the very end. And this is the meaning of those words "It is finished". How beautiful it will be when we all, at the end of our lives, with our errors and our faults, as well as our good deeds and our love of neighbour, can say to the Father as Jesus did: "It is finished"; not with kind of perfection with which He said it, but to say: "Lord, I did everything that I could do. It is finished". Adoring the Cross, looking to Jesus, let us think of love, of service, of our lives, of the Christian martyrs, and it will do us good too to think of the end of our lives. No one knows when that will be, but we can ask for the grace to be able to say: "Father, I did what I could do. It is finished".

Holy Saturday is the day on which the Church contemplates the "repose" of Christ in the sepulchre after the victorious battle of the Cross. On Holy Saturday the Church, yet again, identifies with Mary: all her faith is gathered in Her, the first and perfect disciple, the first and perfect believer. In the darkness that enveloped creation, She alone stayed to keep the flame of faith burning, hoping against all hope (cf. Rm 4:18) in the Resurrection of Jesus.

And on the great *Easter Vigil*, in which the *Alleluia* resounds once more, we celebrate Christ Risen, the centre and the purpose of the cosmos and of history; we keep vigil filled with hope in expectation of his coming return, when Easter will be fully manifest. At times the dark of night seems to penetrate the soul; at times we think: "there is nothing more to be done", and the heart no longer finds the strength to love.... But it is precisely in the darkness that Christ lights the fire of God's love: a flash breaks through the darkness and announces a new start, something begins in the deepest darkness. We know that the night is "most night like" just before the dawn. In that very darkness Christ conquers and rekindles the fire of love. The stone of sorrow is rolled away leaving room for hope. Behold the great mystery of Easter! On this holy night the Church gives us the light of the Risen One, that in us there will not be the regret of the one who says: "if only...", but the hope of the one who *opens himself to a present filled with future*: Christ has conquered death, and

we are with Him. Our life does not end at the stone of the sepulchre, our life goes beyond with hope in Christ who is Risen from that very tomb. As Christians we are called to be sentinels of the dawn, who can discern the signs of the Risen One, as did the women and the disciples who ran to the tomb at dawn on the first day of the week.

Dear brothers and sisters, during these days of the Holy Triduum let us not limit ourselves to commemorating the passion of the Lord, but *let us enter into the mystery*, making his feelings and thoughts our own, as the Apostle Paul invites us to do: "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus (Phil 2:5). Then ours will be a "Happy Easter".

Special greetings

I offer an affectionate greeting to all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors present at today's Audience, including those from England, Denmark, Indonesia, Japan, Hong Kong and the United States. May the Risen Lord confirm you in faith and make you witnesses of his love and resurrection. May God bless you!

I address a special thought to *young people*, to the *sick* and to *newlyweds*. Tomorrow will be the 10th anniversary of the death of St John Paul II: may his example and his witness be ever living among us. Dear *young people*, learn to confront life with his ardour and his enthusiasm; dear *sick people*, carry your cross of suffering with joy in the way that he taught us; and you, dear *newlyweds*, always put God at the centre, that your married life may have greater love and greater happiness.