

GOOD FRIDAY 2011

HAIL CROSS, OUR HOPE

Today, the Church gathers to consider the mystery of sin and evil that oppress humanity. She revisits, in the light of the word of God, the sufferings of Christ that atone for this evil. The Way of the Cross, takes a place as a way for the faithful to consider the Passion and Death of the Redeemer, to express their love to participate in the suffering of Christ. Christ's death recalls the accumulation of sorrows and evils that beset humanity of all times: the crushing weight of our dying, the hatred and violence that again today bloody the earth. The Lord's passion continues in the suffering of men.

Where is God?

Good Friday shows us where God is – here, hanging on the wood of the cross in Jerusalem, and on the crosses throughout the world where people are betrayed by an ally,

abandoned by a friend, denounced by their community, shouted at by crowds, made into a scapegoat, passed from authority to authority, physically abused, mocked and humiliated, labelled and mislabelled, stripped of their clothing and dignity, tortured and executed out of anger, violence, jealousy, and hatred. The way of the Cross continues in our world today. Yet it is only there that we receive the mystery of the death that gives life. Today, the *Via Dolorosa* is transformed into the *Via Gloriosa*. *If Good Friday is a day full of sadness, then it is at the same time all the more propitious a day to reawaken our faith, to strengthen our hope and courage so that each one of us will carry his cross with humility, trust and abandonment in God, certain of his support and victory.* This day, through the mystery and fire of the cross, Jesus crucified becomes our life and our light in the midst of the darkness. Indeed, we must note here that the same Jesus crucified tells us that that love, flowing from the heart of God

and working through the heart of man and woman, is the force that renews the world.

With the cross, Jesus opens wide the door of God, the door between God and men. Now it is open. But also from the other side the Lord knocks with his cross. He knocks at the door of the world, at the doors of our hearts, which so often and in such great numbers are closed to God. And he speaks to us more or less in this way: *If the proofs that God gives of himself in creation do not succeed in opening you to him; if the word of Scripture and the message of the Church leave you indifferent then look at me, your Lord and your God.*

It is this call that in this hour we let penetrate our hearts. May the Lord help us to open the door of our heart, the heart of the world, so that he, the living God, might, in his Son, arrive in our time and touch our lives.

Brothers and Sisters! As the Cross rises up on Golgotha, the eyes of our faith are already turned towards the dawning of the new day, and we begin to taste the joy and splendour of Easter. *If we have died with Christ*, writes Saint Paul, *we believe that we shall also live with Him* (Rom 6:8). In this certainty, let us continue our journey. Tomorrow, on Holy Saturday, we will watch and pray together with Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows, and we pray with all who are suffering; we will pray above all with those who suffer in earthquake-Tsunami stricken **Japan** and **New Zealand**; politically wrecked **India**, **Ivory Coast** and **Libya**; the religious savagery in **Jos**; the senseless and the barbaric incendiary explosion in the North; the **Niger Delta** question; **Akwa Ibom** election turbulence; individuals and families traumatised by the kidnapping in **Abia State** and the unknown victims of recent elections in the land. We pray so that in this dark night, the Crucified Christ will be their hope.