The World Community for Christian Meditation

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Good Friday

In a strange city, on an open moor or in a dense forest, or in a story of profound meanings, one can easily be overwhelmed and lose a sense of direction. In these circumstances we naturally look for a path, however narrow it might be, or any clue that might point to us the right way.

In the inexhaustible story of the Passion, Death and Resurrection that we began last night with the Holy Thursday liturgy of the Last Supper and the washing of feet, we can find the hint and the connections needed to make comprehensive sense of it all. The clue to the Eucharist is the washing of the feet. The Eucharist is the clue to understanding the Cross. Without the Resurrection the Cross remains two-dimensional.

Today we zoom in on the way of the Cross and the liturgy of the Passion and death. Central to this is the time we give to narrating the story. We listen to it once more although we know it well – or think we do. Every re-telling reveals new levels as particular details attract our notice for the first time. Just giving the time necessary for the telling of a story prepares us to understand it better. Often we are too busy to listen to anything twice and we crave new episodes and new stars.

But the veneration of the Cross, even after the too-vocal prayers that precede it, is the most moving and revelatory aspect of today's symbolic approach to the meaning of the death of Jesus. As we kneel and kiss the foot of the Cross our own social status or even our own level of faith does not matter. The act of veneration is a free movement of such humility that, at least in the moment, we are all one and equal. Discipleship never seems so simple and rewarding.

In venerating the Cross we are venerating the truth that can only be known in total surrender. This describes the Cross itself as an absolute surrender to love. As John Main understood, in the end we are not saved by the suffering of the Cross but by the love it transmits to those who venerate it and even to those who don't.

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