# Tuesday 24th March

Jn 8:21-30

Again he said to them, "I go away, and you will seek me and die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come ... You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he." They said to him, "Who are you?"

Isn’t it sad that those who had been with Him for so long even now ask “*Who are You?*” Don’t you feel sorry for all those who seek Him, but don’t find Him? Souls! So many of them!

Saints had that passion (it’s called *zeal*) to reach to everyone and explain to them who Jesus Christ is, and where He is so that they can go to Him. To tell them that Jesus has died for them and that it is, in actual fact, He who is looking for each one of them.

Jesus asked Bl Teresa of Calcutta to take His love to all souls in the streets. To do that, she had to overcome many difficulties and was a bit afraid of taking that final of leaving her convent walls; but Jesus was in a hurry to reach all those souls, and was spurring her up to go for those souls that weren’t finding Jesus and didn’t know Him yet: *‘You have come to India for me. Are you now afraid to take one more step for me? Has your generosity cooled down? Am I only secondary for you? You did not die for souls; that’s why you don’t care what happens to them. Your heart was never drowned in sorrow as was my Mother’s heart. We both gave up ourselves totally for souls. What about you?* ... *Will you refuse?’*

She didn’t refuse, as you know, and brought Jesus to thousands of those souls. Now we have a similar mission: *Will you refuse it?*

# Wednesday 25th March. The Annunciation

Lk 1:26-38

And he came to her and said, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus”.

Today we celebrate the Annunciation: the Incarnation: God becoming Man. Jesus was already in the world nine months before Christmas, but only Mary and St Joseph knew it. Jesus was not in a hurry, you see? As perfect Man, he spends months in the womb, just as we did. He didn’t have to; but He wanted to. He didn’t want to be an exception.

Every time we say the *Hail Mary*, we remind Our Lady of the happiest moments of her existence, and she always listens to her children through this prayer:

A priest was asked by a hospital sister to visit patient number 7 in Ward 3. When he got there he found that the man hadn’t received the sacraments for many years, but had always kept up a promise made to his mother in her deathbed: *to pray three Hail Marys every night*. Eventually the man made his confession and received the Eucharist with great devotion. Leaving the Ward, the priest met the sister and found that he had been in Ward 4, and the patient 7 in Ward 3 was still waiting for him! This was soon put right, but the priest felt thankful for the mistake. He felt still more thankful when the following day found out that the man in Ward 4 had died suddenly that night. *Now and at the hour of our death ...*

# Thursday 26th March

Jn 8:51-59

Jesus said to the Jews: Truly, truly, I say to you, if any one keeps my word, he will never see death." The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, as did the prophets; and you say, 'If any one keeps my word, he will never taste death.' Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you claim to be?" ... Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." So they took up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple.

You, Lord, didn’t say: ‘*before Abraham was, I was’,* but “I AM”.Now, that was quite something! «***I AM***» is the name of God that no Jew would ever dare to pronounce. And you, Lord, not only said it, but said it of Yourself! In other words: You told the Jews: ‘***I am GOD!’*** No wonder they took up stones!

They have heard You saying: “*I am the Bread of Life, the Light of the world, the Door, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life, the Way, the Truth and the Life, the true Vine”*... but never before had they heard anyone say ‘I AM’ except God himself.

At the trial before the Sanhedrin, the High Priest asked You if You were indeed the Christ, the Son of the Blessed God: “***I AM***”, was Your unmistakable answer. And that was the end of the dialogue; there was no other way to understand Your words, Jesus, than with their real meaning: The High Priest tore his clothes and You were sentenced to die.

Let’s make many acts of faith: *Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God, that You are the King of the Universe*.

# Friday 27th March

Jn 10:31-42

The Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of these do you stone me?" The Jews answered him, "It is not for a good work that we stone you but for blasphemy; because you, being a man, make yourself God." Jesus answered them, "... do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God? If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."

Poor people! No matter how many miracles they saw, they would not believe: they were blind because they didn’t want to see. They always got the wrong end of the stick: they want to stone Him because *being a man, He made himself God*, when it was exactly the opposite: *being God, He made Himself a man!*

They thought Jesus had a problem and wanted to kill Him, when the problem was theirs. They thought Jesus wasn’t sound, but it was they who were deaf:

An old man thought that his wife had a hearing problem. So, while she is sitting in her lounge chair, he went behind her and said softly: “*Honey, can you hear me?*” He got no response. He moved a little closer and repeated: “*Honey, can you hear me?*” No response. Finally he moved right next her and said: “*Honey, can you hear me?*” This time she looked up with surprise in her eyes and replied: “*For the third time, Henry, Yes, I can hear you!*” Who really had the hearing problem, the man or his wife?

# Saturday 28th March

Jn 11:45-56

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him; but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council, and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on thus, every one will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation." But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all; you do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish."

When someone doesn’t want to believe for all the miracles they might see, they won’t believe. Read the entire chapter 11 of St John, if you can, to get the idea: Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead after being buried for four days in his tomb. Everyone saw the miracle but some went to inform the Pharisees, who decided to kill Jesus for performing miracles!!! Can you believe it?

Anyway, Jesus came to give His life freely. Tomorrow we start the Holy Week; a week of intense prayer to be spent with Him. Jesus won’t die on the Cross alone this time: You and I will be there: “*My Lord and my God, under the loving eyes of our Mother, we are making ready to accompany you along this path of sorrow, which was the price for our redemption. We wish to suffer all that You suffered, to offer you our poor, contrite hearts, because you are innocent, and yet you are going to die for us, who are the only really guilty ones. My Mother, Virgin of sorrows, help me to relive those bitter hours which your Son wished to spend on earth*”(St Josemaría).

# Sunday 29th March. Palm Sunday

Mk 14:1-15:47

And it was the third hour, when they crucified him. And the inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!" So also the chief priests mocked him to one another with the scribes, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also reviled him. And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Elo-i, Elo-i, lama sabach-thani?" which means, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah." And one ran and, filling a sponge full of vinegar, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that he thus breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

Today our prayer is on Calvary. Go there with your imagination and comfort Our God, Who is hanging on the Cross, looking down to you. Stay there with Mary, consoling our Mother as well. *Lord, never let me separate myself from You!*

# Monday 30th March. Monday of Holy Week

Jn 12:1-11

Mary took a pound of costly ointment of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was to betray him), said, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box he used to take what was put into it. Jesus said, "Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial. The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me."

Judas didn’t like Mary’ generosity towards Jesus; he didn’t like money being spent on Him; he didn’t like Jesus; he didn’t like Mary... he didn’t like anyone but himself!

Everywhere was filled with the fragrance of the ointment, and the face of Jesus was full of gratitude. Mary’s love made Jesus very happy, even though His Passion was near. The first Good Friday was close at hand. How good to be among friends! Let us not forget the solitude of Jesus during these days.

Mary, for her part, was filled with joy when she saw that Jesus smiled because of what she had done. She loved Our Lord so much that nothing was *too much* for Him. “*If we stop to contemplate this scene for a few minutes, we can see the joy that comes from the generosity in the happy face of Mary, who has just made good use of a small treasure. And on the other hand, we see Judas filled with sadness, the sadness resulting from the lack of generosity”* (*Cfr.* Fernandez Carvajal, *The Day That I Changed My Life;* 2009. Sinag-tala).

# Tuesday 31st March. Tuesday of Holy Week

Jn 13:21-33, 36-38

Jesus said, "'Where I am going you cannot come.' Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now; but you shall follow afterward." Peter said to him, "Lord, why cannot I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the cock will not crow, till you have denied me three times.

Peter did love, but he was weak. He was convinced of what he would do for Jesus, but didn’t know himself well. He would use the sword against the guard of the High Priest and tremble before a little servant. Peter the Rock, the head of the apostles denied Jesus three times, swearing by God that he did not know Him, just to save his own skin. He was not the only one. St Matthew and St Mark explain in their Gospels that the other disciples said the same about dying with Him but the rest of the apostles, except John, took to their heels and abandoned him.

We also told You, Lord, that You could count on us, and then, so often we failed to be generous. We forget, like Peter and James and Andrew and the others, that we are weak if we are not humble. We are weak when we don’t ask You for help, when we try to do something on our own.

Help me Lord to never trust myself; remind me to go to You anytime I want to do something for You, because without You I can’t please You. Jesus, do never leave me alone, even if I fail to ask You for help, don’t leave me because without Your grace I’m lost!

# Wednesday 1st April. Wednesday of Holy Week

Mt 26:14-25

Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What will you give me if I deliver him to you?" And they paid him thirty pieces of silver ... When it was evening, he sat at table with the twelve disciples; and as they were eating, he said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." And they were very sorrowful, and began to say to him one after another, "Is it I, Lord?" He answered, "...The Son of man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." Judas, who betrayed him, said, "Is it I, Master?" He said to him, "You have said so."

What has happened, Judas, to your soul? How have you become so miserable? You, an *apostle*, one of those who Jesus met and was told: ‘*Come, follow me’.* And you did follow Him! You saw the miracles, and surely, you loved Jesus for a while. The best moments of your life happened in the company of Jesus. The days in which you could go to sleep smiling were ones when you had seen and heard wonders. You were so privileged: “*many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you* saw*, and did not see it, and to hear what you* heard*, and did not hear it*”.

*“Then after the morsel, Satan entered into*” you, for the door had been opened wide little by little, when you started neglecting the time spent with Jesus, and you became inattentive to His Words; thinking about yourself, and your future, your plans, your life... Your drama was preannounced when you stopped praying, when you stopped telling Jesus what was going on in your soul.

And Jesus cried for you, because He loved you so much!

# Thursday 2nd April. Maundy Thursday

Jn 13:1-15

*Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.*

This is the introduction to the washing of the dirtiest feet in Jerusalem (including Judas’) and the Institution of the Sacrament of the Eucharist: He loved us \_to the end\_. Think about it: He couldn't give us more, He gave Himself to us in the Eucharist.

Love is repaid with love; He loved you \_to the end\_... How do you love Him? Today is a day to \_watch\_ before the Eucharist: “\_remain here, and watch with me\_” (*Mt* 26:38).

"\_When you look at the Crucifix, you understand how much Jesus loved you then. When you look at the Sacred Host you understand how much Jesus loves you now\_" (Bl Teresa of Calcutta).

“\_Do you realize that Jesus is there in the tabernacle expressly for you - for you alone? He burns with the desire to come into your heart...don't listen to the demon, laugh at him, and go without fear to receive the Jesus of peace and love... Receive Communion often, very often... there you have the sole remedy, if you want to be cured. Jesus has not put this attraction in your heart for nothing... The guest of our soul knows our misery; He comes to find an empty tent within us - that is all He asks\_" (St Therese of Lisieux).

"\_God's love for his creatures is so boundless and our response to it should be so great that time ought to stand still when Holy Mass is being said\_" (St Josemaría).

# Friday 3rd April. Good Friday

Jn 18:1-19:42

So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. Pilate also wrote a title and put it on the cross; it read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." ... When the soldiers had crucified Jesus they took his garments and made four parts, one for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was without seam, woven from top to bottom; so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." ... But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfil the scripture), "I thirst." A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished"; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

"*If you really want to love Jesus, first learn to suffer, because suffering teaches you to love*" (St Gemma Galgani).

“*The angels envy us just in one thing: they cannot suffer for God. Only suffering let us say in all property: My God, look how much I love You*”(St Pio of Pietrelcina, Padre Pio).

# Saturday 4th April. Holy Saturday

No Mass today

On Holy Saturday the Church watches at the Lord's tomb, meditating on his suffering and death. The altar is left bare, and no Mass is celebrated. The earth is in silence. Heaven is in silence too, for the angels had not forgotten what men did to God yesterday... The King is sleep. Even animals are still, birds don’t sing today; the wind doesn’t blow as it did yesterday.

His disciples are grief-stricken. Christ lies in the grave, and you and I sit by in mourning. His cold, dead Body still bears the scars of intense suffering, mortal wounds on His Body that will remain visible for all eternity, marked with *the price of my sins*. See on that Face the wounds received to erase our sins. See there the marks of the blows received in order to refashion our warped nature in His Image. On that back see the marks of the scourging endured to remove the burden of sin that weighs upon our shoulders. See those hands, nailed firmly to a tree, for us; the holes on those feet that walked the earth bringing repentance.

Let’s accompany Our Lady today. Still in sorrow as she recalls her Son’s Passion, Our Mother watches with a serene face, in hope. With her we will hold her Son’s body: “*I will press my arms tightly round the cold Body, the corpse of Christ, with the fire of my love...;* *I will unnail it, with my reparation and mortifications..., I will wrap it in the new winding-sheet of my clean life, and I will bury it in the living rock of my breast, where no one can tear it away from me, and there, Lord, take your rest! Were the whole world to abandon you and to scorn you... serviam!, I will serve you, Lord****”*** (St Josemaría).