

## **PART TWO: YOU KNOW THAT I LOVE YOU**

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In the name of the Father, and of the Son, of the Holy Spirit. Amen. My Lord and my God, I firmly believe that you are here, that you see me, that you hear me. I adore you with profound reverence. I ask your pardon for my sins and the grace to make this time of prayer fruitful. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.

Well, during this Easter season, which is the culmination of the liturgical year, we celebrate Our Lord's ultimate victory over sin and the devil. The devil is always conquered if we freely turn to Jesus Christ through his sacraments and even through our exercise of our interior life. It's a victory over sin that the human person on his or her own cannot overcome. And the grace of the Paschal Mystery, that is his death and Resurrection, has won us the capacity to go beyond our sinfulness and repent and be immersed into the life of Jesus Christ.

We want to look at, in this time of prayer, the relationship of the prince of the Apostles, St. Peter, his relationship with the Resurrection. He is the prominent beneficiary of the most important effect of the Paschal Mystery, Jesus' death and Resurrection. Hardly had the Lord risen from the dead that he transmitted his very power to forgive sins. He entrusted to that power, transmitted it to the Apostles themselves when he said, "Whose sins you forgive are forgiven, whose sins you retain are retained." And that's why that gospel is the gospel of Mercy Sunday. Jesus resurrects and he gets down to work, he doesn't waste a moment. He says, now that I have formally and officially won the grace of redemption, the grace of forgiveness, and- the sacraments will be the chief conduits of this grace I have won on the Cross and in my Resurrection- my Resurrection is that compelling sign of victory.

And, previous to the Lord's Passion and death, Peter sinned in a very grievous way. There was a preface to that sin- Jesus made a prediction and told Peter that Satan would sift him like wheat. And- also Jesus predicted that he would convert, he would recover that faith that he momentarily lost in Our Lord's suffering, death, and Resurrection that he should not have lost. I mean, it was predicted, it was told to him- Jesus reprimanded severely, he said, "Get behind me Satan," when Peter called into doubt his painful Redemption and then most of all at the Transfiguration. And Peter reacts, as usual, to that prediction that Satan would sift him like wheat and that he would deny him, he would depart from him, and Peter could not countenance such a possibility.

And we can detain ourselves from a moment, I mean, if St. Josemaria, a canonized saint, a the great saint, his- driving force of his life was to be a saint. He revealed that many times that he wanted to be a saint. He helped other people desire that goal to be totally immersed in Christ, centered on Christ. He at the same time said he was capable of the worst kinds of sins. And he said, without the grace of God, he had that capacity. And in- we all have that capacity to fall headlong from the grace of God. And so we learned from Peter's mistake that we never become presumptuous, that we're incapable of departing from the Lord. With the grace of God and his merciful help we will be faithful, but we can't do it on our own and we are heading in the wrong direction if we ever presume that on our own strength we can make progress in our discipleship, in our union with Christ. And so, we do not presume that we are above sinning.

Anyway, we read this prediction from St. Mark's Gospel, Mark 14:26-31, "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them, 'You will all fall away for it is written, *I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered*. But after I'm raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.' Peter said to him, 'Even though they all fall away, I will not.' And Jesus said to him, 'Truly, I say to you, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.' But he said vehemently, 'If I must die with you, I will not deny you.' And they all said the same." And in another passage, Peter says, "Even if his fellow Apostles deny him, he will not deny him." So, he compared himself as better than his brother Apostles.

And what do we see? There is that overconfidence in his own fortitude and his own loyalty and his own fidelity. He had a good, raw material. He had a big heart. He seemed to be a precipitous and impulsive individual. And we notice a detail in his time with Jesus in Gethsemane, that he falls asleep. And Jesus very much desired that these three Apostles, Peter, James, and John, stay awake, be vigilant, accompany Jesus in his agony, to pray for him and pray with him. And the gospel doesn't give detailed information or explanation, but he fell asleep. Jesus tried to wake those Apostles up and they would go back to sleep. Obviously that, judging from the context, reading the accounts of the Agony in the Garden, Jesus is hurt by that. He needed that moral support, the support from his closest Apostles.

And so- and Jesus says, "Pray that you not enter into temptation." What kind of temptation? Well, the temptation to reject the Cross or to run away from the Cross or disbelieve in the Cross. And implied here, is- no doubt implied, it's directly said, "Pray that you not enter into temptation." What kind of- you know, it's not the Ten Commandments, at least in this case, to have strength and if you do pray with me and watch and pray you will have that strength to accompany me in my suffering. Peter again relies on his own strength. He wields the sword, slices the ear off of Malchus' head. Jesus heals Malchus. Jesus reprimands Peter for- he says, "He who lives by the sword dies by the sword." He was very much opposed of this act of violence. And the gospel says that Peter followed from a

distance. So, it was a fact, but at the same time, there's layers of meaning that Peter followed from a distance that, to quote, to paraphrase an idea of St. Josemaria, that it is impossible or at least difficult to follow Jesus slowly, without prayer, without reliance on his grace.

The- the sequence of events is the following: Peter follows Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest and he's waiting for the outcome of the- of the interrogation of Jesus. And in the meantime, he is accused or identified as a disciple, as someone who knows Jesus: "And- and as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the maids of the high priest came and, seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, 'You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus.' But he denied it saying, 'I neither know nor understand what you mean.' And he went out into the gateway and the maid saw him and began again to say to the bystanders, 'This man is one of them.' But again, he denied it. And after a little while, again the bystander said to Peter, 'Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.' But he began to invoke a curse on himself, and to swear, 'I do not know this man of whom you speak.' And immediately the cock crowed a second time and Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, 'Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.' And he broke down and wept." Now Peter started to make progress. St. Luke adds another piece of information, that when Jesus was being carted away, Jesus- Jesus' gaze met Peter's gaze. It says that, "And Jesus looked at him," and that look prompted that sobbing, that weeping, sorrow over his betrayal.

Alright, we needed that background in order to connect with a key moment in the Resurrection event. We find ourselves on the seashore- we find ourselves with Peter in Lake Gennesaret. He is fishing with his fellow Apostles who are in that fishing business, sons of Zebedee, and his brother Andrew. And he is cited by the one whom Jesus loves, St. John, and we contemplated that in our previous meditation, that Peter didn't wait to be rowed in, he jumped into the water and ran to shore to be with Jesus as soon as he could. And so what happens?

Well, they eat breakfast. Jesus fixes breakfast for them and they have breakfast. And as usual, it's- it's not crystal clear that it is Jesus, not like business as usual. The glorified body of Jesus is not always immediately recognized. And, okay, they have a nice breakfast, they talk, they're relaxed, after probably a hard night's fishing expedition. And now we reach a culmination point in Peter's life intimately linked with the Resurrection because now Peter is dealing with the glorified Jesus.

"When they had finished," St. John's Gospel, John 21:15-19, more or less, "When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' A second time he said to him, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?'

Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything, you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep.'"

So, Peter makes one of the most moving confessions in the history of Christianity and it's a beautiful act of contrition. Now Peter is getting prepared, he's made progress; now he's ready to act in Christ's place as his representative, as his vicar, as the chief of the Apostles. And what does he do? Well, his contrition is- it's not, I really messed up as if he struck out in a softball game or, you know, hit the golf ball off of the fairway, but- or flunked a test, whatever- whatever the example may serve best, but he is sorry because he let Jesus down because he didn't love him, because he failed him in his friendship. And we see Jesus, Peter, I want you back, I'm inviting you back- to come back we need to repent, to say we're sorry and- because when we say we're sorry, basically we're telling Jesus I want to come back, that's what I'm sorry means, and we resolve at least to try not to commit the same sin in order to avoid this barrier in our friendship with Jesus.

And- Peter shows us in a very profound, powerful way that holiness begins with good repentance, and to evangelize we need to be good repenters because Jesus, after every act of contrition, Jesus says, feed my lambs, because now that you have this humility, now that you have this contrition, now that- I can now fill you with this grace. And so, it's not a sorrow because we failed, it's not an embarrassment because we didn't perform, it's not a certain discouragement because of our weakness of will, it is a sorrow because I have alienated myself from Jesus and we see how Jesus is glorified by us coming back. And so he's glorified with Peter's triple act of love. He does not compare himself this time. He says, Lord, you know that I love you. You know all things, you know that I love you, you know that I'm honest, you know that I've been awaiting this moment. I've been suffering and I've lost sleep and I've been agitated because of this triple denial that I will never forget for the rest of my life. And we see how Peter comes back with this act of love.

Concretely, when we repent, when we go to confession, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, we don't want to just feel bad because we made a mistake or we feel bad because we have experienced our own weakness, our own fragility, that we want to express our sorrow because we have departed from the Lord, because we have not loved him sufficiently or we've lacked love or we've deviated from his friendship through grievous sin. And our confession should have that sentiment behind it, that we're telling the Lord, Lord, you know all things, you know that I love you.

And perhaps we could finish up going to the Blessed Mother, asking the Lord to ingrain this consideration that St. Josemaria had many years ago in his young- younger days. And I read this and I will conclude the meditation, "Do penance. Bury your negligences, offenses, and sins in the deep pit dug by your humility. Thus does the farmer bury rotten fruit, dead twigs and fallen leaves at the

foot of the tree that bore them, and what was unfruitful, even harmful, makes a real contribution to a new fertility. Learn to draw from your falls a new impulse: from death, life.”

I thank you, my God, for the good resolutions, affections, and inspirations you have communicated to me in this meditation. I ask your help in putting them into effect. My Immaculate Mother, St. Joseph, my father and lord, my guardian angel, intercede for me.



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