



Archbishop of Montreal

Homilie
Sunday, April 5, 2020

At The Procession With Palms - Gospel 35 Year A (Mt 26:14-27:66)

Feeling alone?

Are there times, or on some days, moments, when you or your loved ones feel all alone as a result of the strict restrictions imposed by public health authorities? When we especially consider those aged 70 and older, and those who are ill, this time of pandemic has called for an increased need for physical distancing.

At the same time, however, we can each become vulnerable to loneliness, and to an all-encompassing form of isolation, both a physical, as well as an emotional one.

During these times, we are called to turn to the Cross, to turn to Jesus on the Cross, Jesus crucified and alone: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?". There, we see Him, alone, separated from God, and from those for whom He came to give his life, from all of humanity. Deserted.

Yet, on this Cross, He bears all our loneliness. There, in his divine mystery and in a profound way, He unites in communion with each person enduring such loneliness. In a way, Jesus becomes much closer to us than we are to our own selves. There is no greater intimacy than that with Jesus, as He bears our loneliness on the Cross. And where does He turn to in his isolation? "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" With these words, He expresses a profound, sudden and mysterious sense of abandonment. While He may feel utterly isolated from humanity, He never ceases to know that his Father is near! He does not address John nor Mary at the foot of the Cross when he says "God has forsaken me!". No, He speaks directly to God! He speaks to his Father! In addressing his Father directly, He reveals his trust in his Father's presence, without which he would not have chosen to address Him directly.

Therefore, when Jesus says: "My God, my God", "My Father, My Father, why have you forsaken me?", He is praying, "I feel completely abandoned, I don't even understand why, and yet I pray to you." Jesus continues to pray. And as He does so, he also continues to pray for all of humanity, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." And as He continues to pray for, and love, all of humanity, His trust in the Father persists: "Into your hands, I commend my spirit. Into your hands, I commend my life."

This way of praying, modelled by Jesus Christ, can become our own. When we feel abandoned, let us pray to Jesus and turn to Him. Let us look upon and contemplate Him. Place a crucifix in your home, be it on a wall, your desk, or a table. Contemplate the crucified Christ who is praying to his Father. Look upon Jesus and pray! Begin praying, even if you feel as though no one is listening. "Lord, I pray to you! Lord, I pray to you! I pray to you because I am fading from myself; even if I am no longer moved to pray, I know that you will not abandon me." Pray to Jesus in the same way He prayed to his Father, by offering up your sorrow and feelings of abandonment, "Why have you forsaken me?". Pray to Him and offer up your pain from feeling deserted, alone, and neglected.

Remember others who are also struggling alone and pray for them. Pray that God's mercy be poured out over all mankind, dwell like a balm in our hearts, and bring comfort and consolation. In the same way, while we find ourselves alone before Jesus, before his own solitude on the Cross, we can each lift up all of mankind in prayer during this pandemic, all those who suffer in their isolation. We can each continue to place our whole life in God's hands, in the hands of Jesus Christ. May we come to know that Jesus Christ will never abandon us.

We are living in a time when, in ways that can be conflicting and unclear, we find ourselves experiencing increased levels of isolation. It is true that physical distancing must be practiced and is essential in helping prevent the spread of infection. At the same time, however, as we try to avoid spreading the virus, we also seek human connection and ways to bring people closer together, perhaps more than ever. This is perhaps one of the blessings that can emerge from the adversity we currently face. While we've been pushed to our limits, and forced to distance ourselves physically, we have worked, and continue to work, towards renewing our means of communication, to seek alternate ways of reaching out to others, i.e. small gestures that have the power to touch hearts, like a phone call, however brief, or a message through social media, using the internet, and always staying current and relevant in the way we connect with others, all while renewing our prayer life at the same time.

We can feel alone as we face the unknown, our hearts filled with uncertainty. Let us pray to the Lord. Let us call upon his Mercy for all mankind, for our families, for each one of us, and let us place our lives into the God's hands, He who will never abandon us.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Christian Lépine". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross symbol at the beginning.

† Christian Lépine
Archbishop of Montreal