

"I will follow You to Calvary. Your life will be the model for mine." (AE 32)

"Once and for all I must convince myself that I was born to save myself, that I am all of God, and that as I am his, my will is the strongest enemy that for my destruction struggles with the most holy Will of God." (AE 25)

St. Raphaela Mary

We are coming to Easter and these three days that we are going to live, from the end of Thursday, with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, until the end of Easter Sunday, form an inseparable unity that we must live and pray with the certainty that pain and hope, sadness and joy, death and life, are never lived separately. We accompany Jesus during Lent, in his gestures and words, loved by some, hated by others. Now, assuming his mission to the end, Jesus is on his way to the Passion.

Do we want to be by his side? Do we want to accompany him to the end? Do we want to be enlightened by the life of Jesus that includes pain and suffering? Do we want to leave our ego and our will to seek the most holy will of God?

It is for love, for love for each one of us, faithful to his life and mission, that Jesus is imprisoned, mistreated, crucified. Jesus dies on the cross for us, for me.

Let us never lose sight of the end, let us be saved by Jesus who wants us on the path of the Resurrection.

Today I would like to pause to meditate on the Easter Triduum, which begins tomorrow, in order to examine a bit what the most important liturgical days of the year represent for us believers. I would like to ask you a question: which is the most important celebration of our faith: Christmas or Easter? Easter, because it is the celebration of our salvation, the celebration of God's love for us, the feast, the celebration of his death and Resurrection.

(...) It (the Triduum) signals the fundamental steps of our faith and of our vocation in the world, and all Christians are called to experience the three Holy Days — Thursday, Friday, Saturday; and Sunday — understandably —, but the Sabbath is the Resurrection — the three Holy Days as, so to speak, the "matrix" of their personal life, of their community life, as our Jewish brothers and sisters experienced the Exodus from Egypt.

(...) In these words — "Christ has risen" — of moving exultation, the Triduum culminates. They contain not only an announcement of joy and hope, but also an appeal to responsibility and mission. And it does not end with *colomba* [traditional Easter cake], eggs, celebrations — even if this is beautiful because it is the family celebration — but it does not end this way. This is where the journey begins, that of the mission, of the announcement: Christ has risen. And this announcement, to which the Triduum leads, preparing us to welcome him, is the centre of our faith and of our hope; it is the core; it is the message; it is — a difficult word, but it says it all — it is the *kerygma* which continually evangelizes the Church and which she in her turn is invited to evangelize.

(...) This is the greatness of Jesus' love: he gives life freely in order to make us holy, to renew us, to forgive us. And this is the very core of this Easter Triduum.. (...) "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above ... not things that are on earth" (cf. Col 3:1-3). Look on high, look to the horizon, broaden the horizons: this is our faith; this is our justification; this is our state of grace! Through Baptism, indeed, we have risen with Jesus and we have died to the things and logic of the world; we are reborn as new creatures: a reality that seeks to become true life day by day.

(...) A neighbour, especially the least and the one who suffers most, becomes the concrete face to whom we must give the love which Jesus has given us. And the world becomes the place of our new life as risen ones. We have risen with Jesus: on our feet, with heads held high; and we can share the humiliation of those who still today, like Jesus, are suffering, are naked, are in need, are lonely, are dying, so as to become, thanks to Him and with Him, instruments of ransom and of hope, signs of life and of resurrection.

In many countries — here in Italy and also in my homeland — there is the custom on Easter day when one hears, one heeds the bells, mothers, grandmothers take the children to rinse their eyes with the water, with the water of life, as a sign of being able to see the things of Jesus, new things. This Easter let us abandon ourselves to cleansing our soul, cleansing the eyes of our soul, so as to see beautiful things and do beautiful things. This is wonderful! This is precisely the Resurrection of Jesus after his death, which was the price paid to save us all.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us be willing to properly experience this now imminent Holy Triduum — beginning tomorrow — in order to be ever more deeply immersed in the Mystery of Christ, who died and rose for us. May we be accompanied on this spiritual journey by the Most Holy Virgin, who followed Jesus in his Passion — she was there, watching, suffering — she was present and united to Him under his Cross, but was not ashamed of her Son. A mother is never ashamed of her child! She was there, and received in her Mother's heart the immense joy of the Resurrection. May she obtain for us the grace to be interiorly engaged by the celebrations of the coming days, so our heart and our life may be truly transformed.

Pope Francis. March 28th, 2018 (General Audience)

HOLY THURSDAY

(John 13, 1-15)

(...) *Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.*

(...) *Jesus knew that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God,*

(...) *"You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand."*

(...) *"So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you."*

Jesus loved us to the end!

- Savor that LOVE.
- How has my fidelity been, with God and with my faith?
- What can I do to be better?

Do as Jesus did.

- What does Jesus teach me with this gesture of washing the feet?
- What may Jesus be asking me to do: "just as I did, do you also"?

SATURDAY

(John 20, 1-18)



"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."

Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. (...) "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."

We do not know where Jesus is!

- How may the disciples have felt, and Mary ... this Holy Saturday?
- Let us feel the silence of this day, make interior silence, for the Lord has died.
- Living without Jesus... is it possible? How?

Raise your eyes, look at the horizon, expand the horizons: this is our faith.

- We wait for the Lord, we prepare ourselves for the great night of the Resurrection, we have hope, we want to be witnesses.



HOLY FRIDAY

(John 18, 1-19, 42)

(...) *"I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said."*

(...) *"Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"*

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. (...) "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone, on the side of truth listens to me." "What is truth?" retorted Pilate.

What is the truth?

- We stay with Jesus ... we accompany his way to the Cross ... with this question ... what is the truth of my life?

EASTER SUNDAY

**"Why do you look for the living among the dead?
He is not here; he has risen!"**

Luke 24, 5b-6

Jesus has risen! He lives in us.

Let us live this news with joy and truth. As Pope Francis says: "There begins the road to mission, to the announcement: Christ has risen!"

May the world become "a space of our new life as resurrected persons."

Let us be witnesses with our LIFE.

May it "become, thanks to Him and with Him, an instrument of rescue and hope, symbols of life and resurrection."



Let us be persons of joy and celebration!

Saint Raphaela Mary