

Reflection on Holy Thursday 2020

Early on Palm Sunday morning, I received many messages from all over the world - sisters and companions, family members and friends, even former sisters. The messages were so varied, marked by their life, by deep longing and trust. Silently I lay on my bed and let all that I had read and heard fall into my heart, and I entrusted it to God. Then with this background thoughts for reflection for this Holy Thursday evening came in my mind. Holy Thursday, an evening of remembrance and invitation.

We stand in the middle of Holy Week and at the entrance gate to the holy three days of Christ's Passion and Resurrection. It is like a pause, a taking in of the past and an alignment with what is to come. Two signs characterize this celebration. They want to help us to capture the deep inner reality of this moment - bread and feet. As different as both signs are, they have so much in common.

Jesus takes the bread, the sign of simplicity, of the everyday. With it he takes his whole human life into his hands, all joys, all growing and maturing, all given attention and healing, the experienced trust and the budding faith, but also the hard arguments and hostilities. In this small piece of bread Jesus presents his human story to us. As in his whole life, he lifts it up into the presence of the Father, thanking and entrusting it. This is the moment of looking back on life and holding it into the presence of God. Then Jesus turns to what is to come, his passion and resurrection. In the breaking of the bread, he takes his breaking before he goes. It is the breaking of bread in betrayal and denial, in being mocked and abandoned. It is to be broken in physical abuse and in carrying the cross, in being nailed and pierced. Jesus holds it out to the Father, not for the glorification of suffering, but in order to help all those who suffer and to gain life in abundance for all out of deep love. This love, this closeness in everything, and the new life, he shares with his own disciples and up to this day, with us.

Let us now look at the feet as well as the bread. Feet rarely receive our attention, but they too carry the signs of our everyday life. They collect the dust of our days, because they carry us everywhere and keep us upright. Sometimes they also feel the burden of our life. Have you ever looked at the feet of another person and washed them? I don't mean on a Holy Thursday evening, but in everyday life - perhaps you did this service for an elderly or a sick person? If so, I kneel before this person, like Jesus, who kneels before the life story of each of us. He carefully takes us and our life with all that it contains into his loving hands. He does not mind getting his

hands dirty in the process. How gently he then touches my life's wounds. How healing is such a touch! The dust of my life is washed away, so that I will reappear beneath it in my human dignity. Jesus serves my healing. He acknowledges my life story with its ups and downs. He knows my divine origin, because we all are coming from the womb of divine love. With renewed dignity, freed from the burden of the days and gifted with the wisdom of our experiences, we are put back on our feet and sent back to life.

Like bread and feet, today we are concretely placed and sent into a challenging time which will be marked by the sufferings and pains of the Corona Pandemic as well as by its experiences of solidarity and renewed love. We participate in the Passion of Christ who walks with us through this world time suffering. To him we entrust our lives. We agree to let ourselves be broken and exploited for others. We surrender ourselves in the many small signs of care and attention. We kneel before each person in service, in comfort and in healing. In faith we are offering life from his resurrection.

We associate ourselves with Francis, who lovingly cared for the abandoned and outcast of his days by washing their wounds. We unite ourselves to St. Clare, who washed the feet of her fellow Sisters in thanksgiving and care after going for begging. We also unite with M. Clara, to whom a young woman came for an admission interview, but when she observed dust in the house, she preferred to leave the convent in Salzkotten. M. Clara did not simply let her go or persuaded her with arguments, but she kept her soul clouded by the dust of life praying in God's presence and made God's call shine again.

Let us be a blessing and light in the heart of the world together with Francis, Clare and M. Clara.

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