

# Reflection for July 2009

## The Loving, Saving Presence of Jesus with us

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10. We are to have a personal love of God our Father, of his Son Jesus, and of the Holy Spirit who abides with us. In a particular way *we cherish in our prayer and labor the naked, abandoned Jesus on Calvary*. We express our love through personal service to his poor and abandoned members.

*“Our relations with our Blessed Saviour and our thoughts of Him should be very personal. That is, we should think of our Lord as a real Being and not as an abstraction...Try and give our Lord an intimate relationship in your own heart. ...Never forget our Blessed Lord is a teacher and that is His lesson. ...no one but a humble person is dear to God because our Lord says that He resists the proud. ‘God resisteth the proud!’(Jas. 4:6) Who are the proud? Those who have an inordinate love for themselves, those who esteem themselves over others. All humility is, is a realization of our relationship with God, and realizing that no matter what I have, it is due to the grace of God. Pride manifests itself not only in an intolerant way of thinking but in an intolerant way of acting.” (MF 8357)*

To overcome our personal egoism and pride we have to discover once again the agonizing Christ who was abandoned on Calvary, the primal source of our humility and self giving. Renouncing the pursuit of praise and the need that everyone speak well of us is part of our following of Christ. It requires prayer and an identification with the Cross, placing ourselves in the framework of Gethsemani and Calvary. This is what Father Thomas Augustine Judge has called the spirit of sacrifice that is procured by asking the Holy Spirit for his gifts, but especially for wisdom and fortitude. A reflection that always helps me in this area is to think about the most difficult missions in our congregation and the daily sacrifices that our missionaries have to make there. Then I think about how few sacrifices I make in comparison to theirs and this encourages me to give of myself more each day to my daily work on my mission.

Here in the South of the United States we see that Catholics continue to be a minority. We now see the new immigrants, the Hispanics who are trying to adapt themselves to this

country, experiencing many prejudices and racial discrimination. The face of an inclusive Church could help them to identify themselves with the abandoned Christ of Calvary, as happened to me with the agricultural workers and immigrants with whom I have contact here in Bainbridge and Cairo, Georgia. I remember that Father Judge said to go forth willingly into territories where the spiritual needs of the people cannot be fully attended to due to a lack of priests or of sufficient funding for them. He also tells us: *The most glorious chapters of congregations are written in those places where there appeared to be no hope.* (Cf. MF 1668).

I am also strengthened by the fact that the love of Christ impels us. We see Christ in the abandoned because they are his image and likeness; we do for Him and we are His ministers. Veronica in the gospels attended his sweaty, blood spattered, dust beaten face, perhaps still damp from the spit of the blasphemers, but it is still the face of Christ. This is the face of Christ that I see in the Mexican and Central American immigrants every day on this mission where I am at.

Some questions for our reflection:

- 1) Left to our own resources, we human beings get bogged a false way of thinking which is filled by our pride and arrogance over our own plans and projections. Are we really willing to leave aside our own plans to allow the poor and abandoned that we serve to set the agenda for us, rather than continue to set it by our own needs or interests? This would be a clear sign of our spirit of sacrifice.
- 2) Jesus opens the way for everyone to find and live in the heart of God and he shows us his living heart through the people we serve. How much are my ears open to hear God who speaks to us through the poor and abandoned or through the laity who have a missionary spirit but do not fully found the way to channel it?
- 3) Jesus reveals to us God's heart as the source of healing, reconciliation, hope, humility, mercy and truth. Let us take a moment of prayer to heal our own hearts, and, as wounded healers that we are, receive God's healing and share with others the gifts that we have received.