

The Death of Christ and the Death of the Christian **Questions for Examination and Reflection**

And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots; then they sat down and kept watch over him there. And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him; for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, la'ma sabach-tha'ni?" that is, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "This man is calling Eli'jah." And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Eli'jah will come to save him." And Jesus cried again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit (Mt. 27:35-50).

O precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his faithful (Ps. 116).

[Mary] saw the face of Jesus bleeding – all over. She couldn't do anything. She was longing to take and give Him a jar of water. I believe He said two – three times: "I THIRST!" Mary leaned near the cross. Jesus was completely covered in blood. We cannot see it on our crosses now, but I believe the ground was completely wet, full of blood. Try to deepen your knowledge of "I THIRST!" (Mother Teresa, May 1997).

Have I meditated upon the death of Jesus recently? When was the last time that I spent some time pondering Jesus on the Cross? Which of His dying dispositions affects me the most? (His thirst to love and to be loved; His total surrender to His Father; His love for Mary and entrustment to us; His darkness as He experienced the consequence of sin; His profound forgiveness as He prays to the Father to forgive our sins)?

Have I often pondered that I am "dust and unto dust I shall return"? Do I fear death? Why? Why not?

Have I *insulated* myself from death? How have I dealt with loved ones, friends, relatives who have died or perhaps are presently facing death? Have I accompanied them? Have I loved them? Have I asked for forgiveness? Have I forgiven them?

Is my notion of death Christian? Do I somehow expect to taste heaven without tasting death? Is my understanding of death shaped more by the world than by my Catholic faith? What needs to change? Can I, with Mother Teresa honestly say, "Death is simply going home to God?"

Have I done my part in teaching my children about the death of the Christian and the Christian's death? Have I helped loved ones to prepare for death? Have I spoken spiritually to them about death and heaven? Have I encouraged them to prepare in advance with the Sacraments of the Church - Confession, Anointing of the Sick, and Viaticum?

How am I preparing for my death? Am I, with Paul, "daily carrying about in my body the dying of Jesus"? Are Jesus' dying dispositions present in me now? Am I thirsting to love God and neighbor more each day? Am I accepting of the trials that befall me? Do I accept passivity or must I always be in control? Do I think often of heaven as my goal? Am I forgiving to those who have hurt me and/or are presently hurting me? Do I make decisions as if I was dying now?

What part do I play in the Passion Play of Good Friday? Am I actively participating in bringing about the death of Jesus? Am I Pilate washing my hands? Am I the Roman Centurion maltreating Jesus? Am I one of the apathetic bystanders, curious but uncommitted to alleviating Jesus' agony? Am I Mary or one of the women present dying with Jesus? How could I become Mary more right now?

How do I deal with the Cross in my life? Is it a scandal to me or is it the *wisdom and power of God*? Do I daily embrace it in my "stretch" toward heaven? How might I behave differently?