



CLOSING EUCHARIST
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REFLECTION

How can today's Gospel (John 18:33-37) shed light on our commitment to JPIC?

Today the Gospel tells us that Jesus was brought before Pilate, the representative of political power at that time, and who asks him whether he is the King of the Jews. Jesus does not recognize Pilate's political power because it is at the service of those who want to silence truth, and he therefore answers with another question. Are you saying this yourself, or because others have said it about me? Pilate defends himself by saying that he is not a Jew, but the representative of Roman authority (the political power of the time), and that this gives him authority at the moment over the Jews. He is the representative of the kakistocrats of his time. He gives power to the people, (to whom he can choose to give popular power) and to the high priests who handed Jesus over to him, and who represent another structure of power (religious). However, Jesus stands free from these structures of power because his title of King is one that comes to him from above. And he turns Pilate's affirmation back over to him: You are the one who is calling me king. And he explains why he has come into this world: to give witness to the truth.

When we speak of commitment to justice, peace and the integrity of creation, we must be aware of the fact that this option leads us to be in opposition to those who are in power at a political, religious and popular level, because, like Pilate, these people are going to have their power brought into question. This has possibly happened to us already, or will happen to us. But Jesus did not get into this situation by chance. He bore witness to the truth. And what is this truth to which he has given witness? His truth is that he has made the Father's Plan his own: to bring good news to the poor, to free those who are captive, to give sight to the blind and to proclaim the Lord's year of grace to the heavens and to the earth: this is the right to equality, that belongs to all peoples. In his daily life, Jesus went about exposing unjust laws, corruption, the abuse of political and religious power, discrimination, violence against women, the denial of rights to children, the exclusion of the poor and of the sick. His style of life and his way of being, which favor the Truth, also question the unjust system.

We know that this had consequences for Jesus, and which led to his death on the cross. We know that many of our brothers and sisters have been willing to give their lives so that there may be structures that are more just, and relationships that are more human and loving, because we know that there will not be peace if there is not justice. Will we be prepared to walk more closely with the crucified people of today, and with those who, in their names, are raising their voices to ask for justice and for the care of creation?

In our declaration of commitment to JPIC, we have affirmed that, as Society of the Sacred Heart, we do not wish to be complicit in systems that are unjust and dehumanizing, that we want to go on listening to the cries of the poor and the excluded on this earth, so that, along with them and with those who are also seeking

a world that is more human and more just, we might weave a new social fabric and also care for our Common Home. We have taken up the challenge to continue to search, in our countries and in our provinces, for concrete ways in which to carry this out.

Jesus speaks with authority in his life and before Pilate. Where did Jesus get this authority that enabled him to speak and to act in accordance with God's Plan? From his life of union with the Father. By being with Him, Jesus came to discover that God, his Father, is the one whose heart was torn apart when he listened to the voices of his people who had been enslaved by their masters throughout the history of the Israelites. By being with Him, Jesus discovered that God was so hurt by what was happening to humanity, that he finally decided to send his Son, who like God the Father, is the Good Samaritan because he got close to the man who was lying wounded by the roadside, and offered him his merciful heart: in other words, his heart went out to the one who was suffering, to the one who felt that that he was worthless in the eyes of other travelers. He acted with compassion because he went up to him, touched him and cured him, and became one with him in his suffering and in the recovery of his dignity. When we discover that mercy is what makes us more human, we are able to risk our lives, because in entering into the pierced heart of humanity, we are moved to be witnesses to the truth, and to be artisans of hope.

During these days we have come to realize, in a variety of ways, that we will only be able to be artisans of hope by walking alongside the poor, the excluded, and alongside men and women of goodwill who are dreaming new dreams of justice, peace and integrity of creation for humanity and for the whole of creation, and who are willing to give their lives for this. If, for reasons of age, health or any other condition, we cannot be with these people, our hearts can be like that of Philippine, who was already sick when she arrived at Sugar Creek. We, too, can seek to go beyond the Rockies and reach new missions, because we can offer our wholehearted support to those who are able to realize such a mission, even if we personally are unable to do so. We can be like Emilia, who spent hours in the presence of the blessed sacrament, praying for those who were working in the shanty towns, and for those in the schools who were raising the awareness of their pupils to issues of social justice. There are so many Emilias in the Society who continue to accompany us with their prayer and who impel us towards greater commitments, because the Kingdom of God begins here and now.

What we have seen and shared, and the cries that we have heard during these days, call us to be givers of life, to feel that we are being invited to be artisans of hope in our own countries and provinces, or by crossing frontiers. Might this be a new moment and call to greater radicality on the part of the Society of the Sacred Heart and of the whole Family of the Sacred Heart, of which we are a part?

Let us ask Mary, the woman of the Magnificat, to take us further into the Pierced Heart of her Son in humanity. Sophie, Philippine, you can count on us! Amen.

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