

σωτήρ

[sōtēr - saviour]

Seven moments with our Lord

[keeping vigil with our teacher on his last night]

In the tradition according to Matthew, Mark and Luke, when the meal with his disciples was over, Jesus goes to pray on the Mount of Olives and in the stillness of the night, in the grove known as Gethsemane, he feels “deeply grieved, even to death” (Mk 14: 34) and “his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground” (Lk 22: 44). He feels the weight of abandonment even as those closest to him could not stay awake in the hour of darkness: “So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? ... the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Mt 26: 40-41).

However, in the tradition according to John, the Beloved Disciple, events are described differently.

On the last night, having washed their feet and encouraged them: “So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet ... Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them.” (Jn 13: 14, 16), the Teacher stays with his friends so that, before his suffering and death, he can offer them the greatest gift: the very heart of his teachings.

On this holy night, where the living sign of the communion of saints is prefigured, he reminds his disciples of all that he has done for them and why they must treasure his teachings in their hearts.

On this night of stillness, they not only relive the memory of the signs which Jesus did in the time he was with them, and that witnessed to his being the Son of God made man, but they are promised the glory of the coming of the Holy Spirit through whom they will be born anew.

On this night in which our salvation is born, the Church keeps vigil: as she waits to receive the gift of hope and complete trust when the love of God is revealed to the world in the blood and water that pours forth from Jesus’ side.

Let us rejoice and be glad, for in the darkness of the cross the light of the Resurrected Christ and of his Spirit is already visible!

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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I

We Adore You, O Christ, and We Bless You, Because by Your Cross You Have Redeemed the World.

I give you a New Commandment

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John (13: 33-35)

Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

(brief silent pause)

There is no greater sign of the reality of salvation than the love and unity among brothers and sisters. There is no harsher sign of tragedy in our lives than attitudes of disregard and indifference, of anger and hatred. Where love is absent, there is the void of death. Hearts may harden and turn cold; or they may suffocate in a fire that destroys all life. Salvation is the breath that Christ breathes unto those vanquished by death. In the gesture of complete self-offering on the cross, he enters within the darkness of the reign of death, and shines therein the light of God's love that heals all wounds.

R/. We are saved by your death and Resurrection.

Jesus, Son of the Living God, you became a man like us and you lived among us. **R/.**

Jesus, you witnessed to the Good News through gestures that gave hope. **R/.**

Jesus, our Saviour, by your power we renounce all spirits of hatred that oppress us. **R/.**

Jesus, with hearts full of your joy, we offer to all your Spirit of Love who unites you with the Father.
R/.

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be

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II

We Adore You, O Christ, and We Bless You, Because by Your Cross You Have Redeemed the World.

I am the Way, the Truth and the Life

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John (14: 1-7)

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.

(brief silent pause)

The God whom we do not see became a man like us so that we could touch him, speak to him and listen to his voice as we do with all those whom we meet on life's journey. The God we thought was far away is truly God with us. He was not with us just for the few years in which Jesus walked on the roads of the Holy Land; God is with us in all those who receive his Spirit and clothe themselves in his love. Love, who is God himself, heals the infirmities in our bodies and souls, thus restoring life. Love, who is God himself, is the one truth that gives meaning to our lives. Love, who is God himself, is the road that leads us from harsh realities to peace. We are like seeds that have to be split open to grow roots and develop into a fruit bearing tree. But Love, who is God, is the fertile soil, the gentle Water and the Light that caresses the first sprout that emerges from the surface.

R/. Soften our hearts that we may receive your Love.

Jesus, Son of the Living God, you prepare a "place" where we relish your joy, our true fulfilment. **R/.**
Jesus, you spread the Good News to all humankind so that we may know the Father in whom we all become your brothers and sisters. **R/.**

Jesus, our Saviour, by your sacrifice we renounce every spirit that mocks Love, who is God himself and whose Holy Perfect Image you are. **R/.**

Jesus, we know you and follow you, so that you may send us to the ends of the earth. **R/.**

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III

We Adore You, O Christ, and We Bless You, Because by Your Cross You Have Redeemed the World.

Peace I leave with you

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John (14: 16-17; 26-27)

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you ... the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

(brief silent pause)

Peace is the fulfilment of life. To live in peace with ourselves and others; to live free from anxiety that provokes such anguish in the silence of our hearts; to be confident and joyful in our daily decisions; to look into the future not only confidently, but with a strong hope in Christ's salvation of the world. We often find ourselves in great darkness, not knowing where to turn to, filled with doubt and fear. Peace becomes truly tangible and fills our hearts when, in this darkness, we trust in God because we make space for the Spirit who shows us the way. Step by step, he lights up the way guiding us to walk. He not only gives us the light of reason, but also the light of his wisdom and thus his peace.

R/. Come Holy Spirit and remind us of Salvation.

Jesus, Son of the Living God, you send the Holy Spirit of the Father so that he may fill our hearts with the joy of the Good News. **R/.**

Jesus, you teach us how to live in peace with ourselves, our brothers and sisters, in society, on this earth and with the oceans which God created for us. **R/.**

Jesus, you chose the cross as a sign of hope in this world, in your name we renounce every spirit of fear and anxiety that weighs down our spirits. **R/.**

Jesus, we know our Advocate who lives within us and in your holy people. **R/.**

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be

IV

We Adore You, O Christ, and We Bless You, Because by Your Cross You Have Redeemed the World.

I am the vine, you are the branches.

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John (15: 4-5; 9-10)

Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing ... As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

(brief silent pause)

Every goodness, beauty and truth originate in the Lord Jesus alone. It is the vine which bears fruit, even if is the branches that become heavily laden with clusters of grapes ripe for the press. It is thus our own arrogance which makes us believe that fine wines are the fruit of our own toil or abilities. Every good achieved, even through our own sacrifices, is a gift which God bestows on the world since it is He who accepts our wish to be his disciples, and to serve others as Jesus washed the feet of his friends. The sweet taste of God's mercy that flows on the earth, is always a sign of his power, his wisdom and his love. Our human greatness lies in this attitude of humility and meekness which makes us empty ourselves, just as the Lord himself chose to die on the cross.

R/. Soften our hearts that we may truly be branches in you.

Jesus, Son of the Living God, you are the example of meekness, humility and mercy. You are the life always poured out for others. **R/.**

Jesus, as the vine is one with its branches, unite us to you as children of the same Father. **R/.**

Jesus, your power shines forth from the weakness that you choose to clothe yourself with; teach us to renounce all spirits of abuse of power—both moral and spiritual—so that we clothe ourselves with the meekness of your Spirit. **R/.**

Jesus, make us your own, so that we may taste your Spirit, and thus, in unity with you, we may bear much fruit through works of charity that we offer to our brothers and sisters, and even those more distant from us. **R/.**

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V

We Adore You, O Christ, and We Bless You, Because by Your Cross You Have Redeemed the World.

I have called you friends

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John (15: 11-17)

I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

(brief silent pause)

There is no greater love than that of brothers and sisters sharing their lives with each other: not out of self-interest; not in order to take advantage of each other, but because they truly see God's light in one other. Friendship is a relationship between those who look in each other's eyes, face to face, because neither climbs up on a pedestal. It is a dynamic that holds a community together. The Spirit who binds them together is like a river that fills the earth with water, irrigating the soil and producing fruit. Thus, the communion of saints, is not broken by death—on the contrary, it is strengthened by the self-offering death of its saints!—but it is broken by discord, hardness of heart, indifference and hatred. The earth shrivels up and becomes a wasteland when hearts are hardened against the love and friendship taught by Jesus.

R/. Only in your love do we find life.

Jesus, Son of the Living God, you gave your life for your friends so that love could fill to the ends of the earth. **R/.**

Jesus, you chose your friends to witness to your name till the end of time. **R/.**

Jesus, you gave your life for us. Give us the strength to reject every spirit of division, hatred and individualism, that, like a dam, prevents the water of your Life from flowing within us. **R/.**

Jesus, you gave your life as an act of unending love. Teach us to be your true disciples in giving of ourselves unconditionally. **R/.**

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VI

We Adore You, O Christ, and We Bless You, Because by Your Cross You Have Redeemed the World.

Your joy may be complete

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John (16: 20-24)

Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy. When a woman is in labour, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. On that day you will ask nothing of me. Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.

(brief silent pause)

Suffering does not have the last word. Sorrow is not the gist of human experience. Only the joy brought to us by Jesus is everlasting—despite all the fear, trauma, loss, and devastating experiences that crush and bruise the soul. With every wound that we bear—the fruit of the death of sin—there is the salvation that conquers: the joy of the Good News. Every void which we experience, every abyss which discourages us, can only be filled with love. The Spirit, the Advocate who has been sent to us, fills us with hope and trust, so that no terror may overpower us for Jesus has already triumphed over death.

R/. Give us a taste of the joy of the Good News.

Jesus, Son of the Living God, you conquered death; you broke the gates of the abyss where we lose our soul, and you delivered us. **R/.**

Jesus, you taught us that Joy is greater than sorrow; that Hope is loftier than fear; that Faith rules over every doubt. **R/.**

Jesus, you gave your life for us so that we gain eternal life. Give us the strength to renounce every spirit of greed, fear and discouragement that keep us imprisoned by Death. **R/.**

Jesus, as your disciples, you entrusted us with the mission to reach out to every heart who is eager to receive your everlasting Joy. **R/.**

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VII

We Adore You, O Christ, and We Bless You, Because by Your Cross You Have Redeemed the World.

As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John (17: 11-19)

And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

(brief silent pause)

The disciple is not greater than the Teacher, but the disciple is gifted with the power of the Spirit to perform greater deeds than the Teacher. This is the promise Jesus made to us: he does not promise a life without persecution, but he promises that he will be with us forever and that his Spirit is our shield against all evil because he has triumphed over death. There is no evil that does not wither into nothingness; and there is no Love that does not bear fruit and fruit in abundance. This is our hope and our faith: we are sinners, sick and vulnerable, but, even so, we are chosen: and since we are chosen, his calling is stronger—and appears higher—in our infirmity. We have received this calling and the power to fill the earth with new Life in the Spirit. This is enough...in fact it is the abundance of God's Mercy.

R/. Holy Spirit, abide in us.

Jesus, Son of the Living God, you took on flesh like us to show us the power promised to us. **R/.**

Jesus, you chose us to be signs of light and hope when darkness clouds the earth. **R/.**

Jesus, you sent the life-giving Spirit to us; we thus renounce every spirit of idolatry that blinds us against your power and your Mercy **R/.**

Jesus, you loved us till the end; strengthen us in your example so we may also love one other **R/.**

Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be