Good Friday
Rolling Meadows - 1969

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IN NOMINE JESU

St. Luke 23: 27, 28 AND THERE FOLLOWED HIM A GREAT MULTITUDE OF THE PEOPLE, AND OF WOMEN WHO BEWAILED AND LAMENTED HIM. BUT JESUS TURNING TO THEM SAID, "DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM, DO NOT WEEP FOR ME, BUT WEEP FOR YOURSELVES!"

Jesus was on Death Row! With thorn-crowned Head He ~~was~~ making and bleeding back His way along the Via Dolorosa - the Way of Sorrows - the Road to the Cross. Those who loved Him - those who had followed Him - did not want to hear of it. They did not want to believe it. It was just too terrible to be true! The women especially - perhaps because they dared to follow along while the BEWAILED AND LAMENTED HIM - perhaps because they were a little more sensitive, a little more compassionate, than the men - but perhaps only because they were free enough to give expression to the great grief which broke their hearts. They did not try to put on a brave front. That is the advantage women still have today over men - they are not ashamed to cry!

stout-hearted - brave, bold men

~~others~~ fled

We have come here tonight to remember the anniversary of His death. And we weep too - if not outwardly then at least inwardly. Watching, as most of those earlier disciples did, from a safe distance, we WEEP FOR HIM. We weep because this is the day we remember that HE DIED and in what manner HE DIED. The veiled Cross - the black vestments - the barren altar without the candles - these are all expressions of our sorrow - the Son of God nailed to a Cross, the Son of God plunging into the darkness of death - the Son of God laid in a grave!

It is no wonder that Luke reports: A HUGE CROWD OF PEOPLE FOLLOWED HIM, INCLUDING WOMEN WHO WRUNG THEIR HANDS AND WEPT FOR HIM. But Jesus does not want tears shed over Him. WOMEN OF JERUSALEM, DO NOT SHED YOUR TEARS FOR ME, BUT FOR YOURSELVES AND FOR YOUR CHILDREN!

Michel Quoist gives an interesting twist to these words in one of his famous prayers:

> They weep.
> They sob.
> It's easy to understand if you see what men have done to Him.
> And they are helpless, they cannot interfere,
> So they weep, they weep in pity.
>
> Lord, You have seen them, You have heard them,
> But You said: "Weep first for your sins."

To pity your sufferings and the sufferings of the world I manage very well, Lord,
But to weep for my own sins, that's another matter.
I'd as soon bemoan those of others,
It's easier.
I'm well up on that; the whole world passes every day before my tribunal.
I've found plenty of guilt: in politics, economics, slums, alcohol, movies, industry. I see it in many people: in laissez-faire Christians, in priests who don't understand a thing, and in many others, Lord, many others.
All in all, in just about the whole world save me.

Lord, teach me that I am a sinner.

We don't find it hard at all to weep for the world around us and its troubl and suffering people. Today our young people - with hundreds of other teen-ager like them - walked in a Hike for the Hungry - for the hundreds of thousands of people in our world who are dying from hunger - babies, children, youth, adults, aged - millions of them! HOW LIKE OUR LORD! Thank God for these young people! In so many ways they show up us conservative, skeptical, slow-to-action adults! We older people always seem afraid to venture forth for a cause - perhaps for fear that someone will misunderstand our intentions - perhaps for fear that we will be crucified.- perhaps for fear that some subversive movement will capitali on our efforts. Foot-sore - ~~perhaps~~ with bleeding blisters - bone weary - they have shown a concern for suffering people. HOW LIKE OUR LORD! INASMUCH...

But that is not yet what Good Friday is all about! Our Lord does not want us to WEEP FOR HIM. He does not want us even to weep JUST FOR OTHERS who are suffering. HE WANTS US TO WEEP FOR OURSELVES!

This is the last thing we want to do - to admit that there may be something wrong with us too, or that we have a share in the guilt of mankind - in the sin that sent the suffering Son of God to the Cross.

LORD, TEACH ME THAT I AM A SINNER! Lord, help me to kneel down in the dust and dirt at the foot of Your Cross - to beat my own breast - and honestly confess: I, A POOR, MISERABLE SINNER, CONFESS UNTO THEE ALL MY SINS AND INIQUITIES WITH WHICH I HAVE OFFENDED THEE AND JUSTLY DESERVED THY TEMPORAL AND ETERNAL PUNISH-

MENT! Lord, it ~~was~~ is my sin that brought this woe on Thee - my sin, not just the sin of others. Lord, I am capable of any and all of the crimes and atrocities that other people commit. Not only am I capable of them, Lord I have done them - if not in actual fact, then at least in my heart. Violence and war, hatred ar lust, resentment and the urge for reprisal — these are all a part of my soul too! Lord, do they curse and swear and deny You - so have I! Do they pass befc You and express their contempt, their obscene derision, their mocking indifferenc Do they laugh at You, slap You, spit in Your face, scourge You, make a public spectacle of You and reject You? Do they crucify You? Lord, I am a part of them!

I have turned traitor and run the other way. So often - more times than I care to remember - I have been a coward, Lord. I have NOT confessed You. I hav remained silent. I have been indifferent. I have hid in a corner.

LORD, TEACH ME THAT I AM A SINNER. Help me to weep for myself! It is for me that You hang - suffering, bleeding, dying - on the Cross! It is FOR ME!

You called the better people a BREED OF VIPERS. You told them that their hearts were BLACK SEPULCHRES with FINE EXTERIORS. You chose the decaying lepers You spoke fearlessly with unacceptable strangers. You ate with notorious sinner and You said that streetwalkers - prostitutes would be the first in Paradise. You got on wel with the poor, the bums, the crippled. Your interpretation of the Law reduced i to one little commandment: TO LOVE!

LORD, TEACH ME TO LOVE! In the midst of my tears of repentance let me hear Your Prayer of LOVE - Your Prayer of FORGIVENESS: "FATHER, FORGIVE THEM FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO." What a blessed and glorious thing that FORGIVENESS is! It brings LIFE and SALVATION & the glory of heaven - for me, for me!

Lord, TEACH ME TO WEEP FOR MY SINS!
TEACH ME TO LOVE!
HELP ME TO FIGHT!
HELP ME TO SPEAK!
HELP ME TO LIVE YOUR GOSPEL!
TO THE END -
TO THE FOLLY OF THE CROSS! Amen.