Good Friday of the Lord's Passion

Gospel text (*Jn* 18:1—19:42): When Jesus had finished speaking, He went with his disciples to the other side of the Kidron Valley. There was a garden there where Jesus entered with his disciples. Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place since Jesus had often met there with his disciples. He led soldiers of the Roman battalion and guards from the chief priests and Pharisees, who went there with lanterns, torches and weapons (...).

The guards and the soldiers, with their commander, seized Jesus and bound him; and they took him first to Annas (...). Then Annas sent him, bound, to Caiaphas, the High Priest (...).

Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the court of the Roman governor. It was now morning (...). Then Pilate had Jesus taken away and scourged. The soldiers also twisted thorns into a crown and put it on his head. They threw a cloak of royal purple around his shoulders and began coming up to him and saluting him, «Hail, king of the Jews», and they struck him on the face. Pilate went outside yet another time and said to the Jews, «Look, I am bringing him out and I want you to know that I find no crime in him». Jesus then came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple cloak and Pilate pointed to him saying, «Here is the man!». On seeing him the chief priests and the guards cried out, «Crucify him! Crucify him!» (...). Then Pilate handed Jesus over to them to be crucified.

They took charge of him. Bearing his own cross, Jesus went out of the city to what is called the Place of the Skull, in Hebrew: Golgotha. There He was crucified (...). Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister Mary, who was the wife of Cleophas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw the Mother, and the disciple whom He loved, He said to the Mother, «Woman, this is your son». Then He said to the disciple, «There is your mother». And from that moment the disciple took her to his own home.

With that Jesus knew all was now finished and He said, «I am thirsty», to fulfil what was written in Scripture. A jar full of bitter wine stood there; so, putting a sponge soaked in the wine on a

twig of hyssop, they raised it to his lips. Jesus took the wine and said, «It is accomplished». Then He bowed his head and gave up the spirit (…).

Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane

EDITORIAL TEAM evangeli.net (based on texts by Benedict XVI)
(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today, the Mount of Olives - the same old one - is one of the most venerable sites of Christianity. Here we can be confronted with one of the most dramatic moments in the mystery of our Redeemer: it was here that Jesus experienced that final loneliness, the whole anguish of the human condition. Here, the abyss of sin and evil penetrated deep within His soul. Here, He was to quake with foreboding of His imminent death. Here, He was kissed by the betrayer. Here, He was abandoned by all the disciples.

St. John takes up all these experiences and gives a theological interpretation to the place: with the word "Orchard" he alludes to the story of the Paradise and the Fall. He means to say that it is there where that story is taken up again. It is in that orchard, that "Garden" of Eden, that Jesus is betrayed, but the "Garden" is also the place of the Resurrection

—In the garden, Jesus has fully accepted the Father's will, made it His own, and thus, changed the course of history. Here He has also fought for me!

The Passion of Christ

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Today, breath taken, we commemorate the Passion of Jesus Christ. His itinerary; the Cenacle of the Eucharist, the Garden of Olives, the palaces of Caifas and Herrod, the Pretoria of Pilate, Calvary of his death and the tomb. In each one of these places, between us all, we have made him suffer.

God could have redeemed us in a thousand different ways. He chose the path of suffering to the point of giving up his life. "To give ones life" is the greatest show of Love there is. There is no improvising here: it was prophesized in the Old Testament, Jesus made reference to it many times; in the Last Supper He gave us the present as food, his "Body which will be given up"; at Gethsemane He prays and sais "yes" to God the Father. On the Cross, very consciously, says YES again, giving up his spirit with total freedom and serenity.

—Jesus, my Saviour, I will look after you with my hands, I will defend you with my arms, I will give you glory with my intelligence, and I will adore you with all my heart. I will do it with your, Our, blessed Mother, Mary.

The position of prayer: Jesus prays on his knees

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Today, after the admonition to surveillance addressed to the Apostles, Jesus moves slightly away. The prayer in the Mount of Olives begins now. Mathew and Mark tell us that Jesus fell on his face: the prayer position which expresses the extreme submission to the will of God; the most radical abandonment to Him, a posture that western liturgy still prescribes during Good Friday and in the monastic profession, as well as in the ordination of deacons, priests and bishops.

Luke however says that Jesus prayed on his knees. Based on the prayer posture he thus introduces the night struggle of Jesus in the context of the history of Christian prayer: while he was being stoned, Stephen fell to his knees and prayed (Acts 7:60); Peter knelt down before raising up Tabitha (Acts 9:40); Paul kneels down when he bids farewell to the disciples in Ephesus (Acts 20:36)...

- Lord, man is never so much man as when he kneels down in front of You.