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22 April 2007

On the Occasion of the Cancellation of TEC 244

My dear friends in Christ: May the Lord give you peace.

What are we to say today? It is with a certain sadness and dissatisfaction that we have gathered this evening to give thanks to the Lord for the blessings he has bestowed upon the team of TEC 244 in their preparations. At the same time we, offer to him our disappointment, our hurt, our pain. The cancellation of a weekend after so much prayer, so much planning and excitement, is never easy, yet even now - especially now! - we must cry out: "To the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor, glory and might, forever and ever" (Revelation 5:13). We must trust that Christ Jesus knows what he is doing and that he knows well where he is leading us.

Some might see in the cancellation of this weekend the hand of the Evil One who continually says to the followers of Christ: "We gave you strict orders, did we not, to stop teaching in his name" (Acts 5:28)? Some might be discouraged at the sight of what seems to be the action of Satan. Yet, even now, Simon Peter says to us, as he said to his brother Apostles, "I am going fishing" (John 21:3). Peter will not be discouraged in the spread of the Gospel and neither should we be. His words

are, really, an invitation to join him in his mission, to become with him "fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19).

We must not today grow weary or faint-hearted in our humble service of the Lord. We must not allow the voice of the Evil One to distract us from the Lord, we must not allow him to lead us astray. We must, rather, focus our attention constantly on "him whom they have pierced" (John 19:37), on him to whom the hosts of heaven adore, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and blessing" (Revelation 5:12).

Through this Lamb who "stands as if slain" (cf. Revelation 5:6), we come to learn that

The Lord carries His wounds through eternity. He is a wounded God; He allowed Himself to be wounded out of love for us. The wounds are for us the sign that He understands us and that He allowed Himself to be wounded out of love for us.<sup>1</sup>

Today we can touch these wounds in a profound way in our own pain and in the pain of our brothers and sisters who suffer every day.

Indeed, the Lord is always allowing Himself to be wounded for us! What better guarantee of His mercy and what consolation this means for us! And what certainty it gives us about who He is: "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28)! These words constitute for us a duty to allow ourselves to be wounded in turn for him.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, 15 April 2007.

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In the theme song that was chosen for this weekend - "Love Has Come," by Matt Maher - we sing, "Love has come to show the way." Yes, Love has come to show the way, the way to be wounded out of love, the way to live the spirituality of TEC, the spirituality of wheat: "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit" (John 12:24).

We can either accept the suffering that the Lord invites us to embrace or we can reject it. We know that in the lives of those who follow Christ that what the Psalmist sings is true: "At nightfall, weeping enters in, but with the dawn, rejoicing" (Psalm 30:6). Paradoxically, the darkness of the Cross leads to the light of joy. The darkness of a cancelled weekend breaks way to the radiant beauty of the question Jesus poses to each of us: "Do you love me more than these" (John 21:15)?

Hearing this question we become all too aware of our sins and weaknesses. Jesus asks Peter this question after he has denied knowing him not just once, but three times. Peter abandoned the Lord and now Jesus asks if Peter loves him. Have we not each abandoned the Lord? Have we not each failed to follow him? Have we not each rejected his love?

Even so, the Lord asks us, "Do you love me?" In the original Greek, there are two different words for "love" used in this exchange between the Prince of Peace and the Prince of the

Apostles: "fileo" and "agapao" (from which we get the word agape) yielding a profound meaning often lost in English.

"In Greek the word 'fileo' expresses the love of friendship, tender but not total, whereas the word 'agapao' means love without reservations, total and unconditional.

"Jesus asks Peter the first time: 'Simon...do you love me (agapas-me)' with this total and unconditional love (cf. John 21:15)? Before the experience of the betrayal, the apostle would certainly have said: 'I love you (agapo-se) unconditionally.' [But now that he has known the bitter sadness of infidelity, the tragedy of his own weakness, he says with humility: 'Lord, I love you (filo-se),' that is, 'I love you with my poor human love.' Christ insists: 'Simon, do you love me with this total love that I want?' And Peter repeats the answer of his humble human love: 'Kyrie, filo-se,' 'Lord, I love you as I know how to love.'

"The third time Jesus only says to Simon: 'Fileis-me', 'Do you love me?' Simon understood that for Jesus his poor love, the only one he is capable of, is enough, and yet he is saddened that the Lord had to say it to him in this way. Therefore, he answered: 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you (filo-se).'

"It would seem that Jesus adapted himself to Peter, rather than Peter to Jesus! It is precisely this divine adaptation

that gives hope to the disciple, who has known the suffering of infidelity. From here trust is born that makes him able to follow to the end...

"From this moment, Peter 'followed' the Master with the precise awareness of his own frailty; but this awareness did not discourage him. He knew in fact that he could count on the presence of the Risen One beside him. From the ingenuous enthusiasm of the initial adherence, passing through the painful experience of denial and the tears of conversion, Peter came to entrust himself to that Jesus who adapted himself to this poor capacity to love. And he also shows us the way, despite all our weakness.

"We know that Jesus adapts himself to our weakness. We follow him, with our poor capacity to love and we know that Jesus is good and he accepts us. It was a long journey for Peter that made him a trustworthy witness, 'rock' of the Church, being constantly open to the action of the Spirit of Jesus. Peter would present himself as 'witness of the sufferings of Christ and participant of the glory that must manifest itself' (I Peter 5:1).<sup>3</sup>

Today we, too, are witnesses of the sufferings of Christ and, too, participate in the glory of the Cross. Let us, then, allow ourselves to fall to the ground and die, to be wounded for

the Lord Jesus as he was wounded for us. Let us offer to the Lord our humble love as best as we can, trusting that it will be enough for him. Amen.

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<sup>3</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience Address, 24 May 2006.