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### Good Friday of the Lord's Passion

We know that Christ Jesus is "the light of the world" and that wherever there is light there is warmth (John 8:12). The warmth of Christ emanates from the fire of his love. Therefore, whoever is in Christ is warm and knows love, and whoever is not in Christ is cold and is without love.

After the arrest of Jesus, "Simon Peter and another disciple [whom tradition says is John] followed Jesus" (John 18:15). John must have followed Jesus more closely, for he sent the maid outside the gate to let Peter inside (cf. John 18:16).

Upon entering the courtyard, Peter declares, "I am not" one of Jesus' disciples. Immediately thereafter, we are told, "Now the slaves and the guards were standing around a charcoal fire that they had made, because it was cold, and were warming themselves. Peter was also standing there keeping warm" (John 18:18). Why is Peter standing at the fire and where is John?

Peter remains at the fire and there denies knowing Jesus twice more. Now he feels the cold of the night air because, like the slaves and the guards, he has extinguished the fire of God's love through his three-fold denial.

John, though, did not deny Christ and so he did not stay with the others at the fire; his heart was not cold but was warm

with the love of - and for - the Lord. John follows Jesus so closely that he is present with Mary and the other women at the foot of the Cross. So intently did the fire of divine love burn in him that he would not be separated from his Master and Teacher (cf. John 13:13).

What, then, became of Peter after "the cock crowed" (John 18:27)? "Peter remembered the word that Jesus had spoken: 'Before the cock crows you will deny me three times'" (Matthew 26:75). He then "went out" (Luke 22:62) and "broke down and wept" (Mark 14:72) "bitterly" (Matthew 26:75).

Only minutes before, Peter adamantly proclaimed, "I will lay down my life for you" (John 13:37). Then, in the garden, Peter seemed willing indeed to lay down his life for Jesus. When Judas arrived with the "band of soldiers and guards from the chief priests and Pharisees" (John 18:3), Peter took his sword, defending not himself but his Master (cf. John 18:10).

What did Peter see when the cock crowed that made him weep bitterly? He is a man of action, not tears. What did he see?

He must have recalled that day when Jesus first called him. Peter said to him that day, "at your command I will lower the nets" (Luke 5:5). After the very large catch, Peter "fell at the knees of Jesus and said, 'Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man'" (Luke 5:8). To his humble and honest admission,

Jesus said, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men" (Luke 5:10).

Peter recalled the many times he failed to serve and follow his Master and he knew, in that instant, the depth of his sin.

He realized, too, that Jesus "was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins; upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole, by his stripes we were healed" (Isaiah 53:5). Peter knew that "we had all gone astray like sheep, each following his own way; but the LORD laid upon him the guilt of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

This is what Peter saw: he saw his sin and he saw the response of Christ Jesus, the judgment of love and mercy. He saw that Jesus went to his death by his own power. Before such tremendous love what else can one do but weep bitterly?

Peter could not bring himself to look upon Jesus but fell to the ground weeping in fear and love. In that moment the fire of divine love was rekindled in him and he was no longer cold but warm.

You need not live in cold and darkness any longer. Come to the Cross and see your salvation! Come to the Cross and see what Peter saw: the face of God, the face of love. Come to the Cross and weep bitterly for your sins, that you, too, may have the fire of divine love rekindled in you. Amen.