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Good Friday of the Lord's Passion

Only moments before he breathed his last, our Savior cried out, "I thirst" (John 19:28). These are strange words to utter as one hangs in excruciating pain. Surely Jesus does not ask for a drink of water to ease his suffering, for this water cannot do. For what, then, does he thirst?

He says these words because, "On the Cross, it is God Himself who begs the love of His creature: He is thirsty for the love of every one of us."<sup>1</sup> Jesus thirsts for our love.

We heard last night from Saint John that Jesus "loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end" (John 13:1). Looking upon his Cross we know this to be true. At the same time, we are confronted with this question: Can I say that I have loved Jesus to the end? Can I say that I am always faithful in following after him? Do I thirst for his love as he thirsts for mine?

We know that we cannot claim to be always faithful and for this reason the love of Christ Jesus is all the more wondrous and beautiful. Saint Paul put it this way: "God proved his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Message for Lent 2007.

Hearing Jesus' words, "I thirst," ought to move us to humble tears and sincere repentance because he thirsts so greatly for our love that he gives his life for us, he takes upon himself "the chastisement that makes us whole" (Isaiah 53:5).

We know that love is always a willingness to suffer. Today we see quite clearly his willingness to suffer even unto death. Here we must ask: Am I willing to suffer today for him and in this way to love him? Will I offer my love to the Crucified Lord to quench his thirst, or will I refuse to be humbled by his love and so keep his heart parched for my love? What will my reply to his cry from the Cross?

To understand the depth of this love, Saint Clare of Assisi urges us to

Look upon him who became contemptible for you, and follow Him, making yourself contemptible in the world for Him. Your Spouse, though *more beautiful than the children of men*, became, for your salvation, the lowest of men, despised, struck, scourged untold times throughout His whole body, and then died amid the sufferings of the Cross (Psalm 44:3).<sup>2</sup>

My dear sisters and brothers, standing before this tremendous display of love,

What other response can we give to a love so great, if not that of a heart that is open and ready to love? But what does it mean to love Christ? It means trusting him even in times of trial, following him faithfully even in the *Via Crucis*, in the hope that soon the morning of the

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<sup>2</sup> Saint Clare of Assisi, The Second Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague, 19-20.

Resurrection will come. Entrusting ourselves to Christ, we lose nothing, we gain everything.<sup>3</sup>

Let us then gaze upon his Cross and cry out to him, "Let your face shine upon your servant; save me in your kindness" (Psalm 31:17).

As you look upon the Cross of our salvation, "take courage and be stouthearted, all you who hope in the Lord" (Psalm 31:25). "Never let the thought of Him leave your mind but meditate constantly on the mysteries of the Cross and the anguish of His mother as she stood beneath the Cross."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, 26 May 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Saint Clare of Assisi, Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges, 9-12.