

ENCOURAGEMENT ENCOURAGEMENT



April 2023 – Issue 141

Pieta



THE HOST APOSTOLATE
WWW.THEHOSTAPOSTOLATE.ORG

14, GOATBECK TERRACE,
LANGLEY MOOR,
COUNTY DURHAM DH7 8JJ
thehostapostolate@gmail.com

Recently I was given a beautiful statue of Jesus lying in the arms of His mother – slumped, broken and clearly dead. . The more that I looked at it the more I realised the agony of His mother and every gesture captures this excruciating moment as she holds Him before the burial. At that moment were her thoughts on the Resurrection... highly unlikely, but more on the loss of her most beloved Son. The more I gazed the more I was taken through the many agonies that both she endured but also the agonies that any mother, parent, endures at the loss of a child, regardless of age. Are we not always children to our parents? This image known as the Pieta- Pity, fashioned and sculptured by Michelangelo, stands at the entrance to St. Peter's Basilica in Rome for all to see. It is a reminder of the very human event and circumstance that all who stood at the foot of the Cross took part in, each with their individual grief. There was St. John, the youngest Apostle, who initially ran away, Mary Magdalene whose love for Jesus took her to a true conversion, and of course the other women such as Mary Clopas, Mary the mother of James and Joseph and others.

I also reflected on the word Pieta because the word pity originated from this and also Piety. How often these word are derided and ignored as something a little to be debased. Piety, once considered an aspect of a prayerful heart is now too often regarded as something lesser than 'true' prayer and almost an exaggerated form of devotion- restricted to the less able, older people and sadly the domain of womenfolk. Yet if you think of the root from which it came- nothing could be further from the truth. It is rather sad that this has happened as it takes away from the core of identification with the compassionate care for the agonies of Jesus. It extends to a real empathy and realisation of it.

Indeed, the very word compassion means 'with passion' with the double meaning of deep emotions

and reflection on the sufferings of Jesus. The word Piety is sometimes replaced by the word *reverence* which perhaps today, has more resonance either way. Piety, 'true piety' is a gift of the Holy Spirit received at the Sacrament of Confirmation. How can we therefore put it on a 'back burner' 'so to speak and discard its relevance?

To return therefore to the importance of Piety and the importance of it in our lives...

We sometimes forget that we are witnesses and that others will judge us according to how we behave, especially in the house of God. Now there are many ways of praying and each presents itself in a different way. Each type of prayer requires a different disposition, in other words there can be periods of silence, of song, of listening or communal action but if in each one we are not focused on what we are doing, speaking in our hearts to God, Father Son or Spirit this will, in a mysterious way, become evident to others. It always amazes me that somehow true prayer can be made obvious by the very way that we look or stand sit etc. I am not talking about any obvious demonstration of prayer but something that is almost invisible yet tangible.

There is something in that exchange between God and man that can be felt. Reverence is a sign which accompanies such prayer.

One of the stories that reflects this is told by an elderly priest about one of his parishioners. Puzzled by an old man who use to come into the church daily, but who carried no prayer book or rosary, but just sat quietly in the pew and was stuck by his sincerity, he asked him What do you do when you come into the church, what do you say. The old man replied... 'I say nothing Father'. The priest continued, determined to find out his secret. The old man looked up and with eyes full of compassion replied, "I just look at Him and he looks back at me, that's all".

Enliven your faith, which is essential to understand and achieve piety St. John Bosco

What a perfect way to explain prayer, yet that seeming 'no action' relayed Piety, and prayer. How far removed is this from the dictionary definition of Piety which states that Piety is 'over-zealous religious practice or hypocritical religiosity.'

The Divinely Merciful Creator has allowed and encouraged us to commune with Him. He has made it possible for us to be in contact with Him and be led and protected by Him. Reverence allows us both to remember who we are, but also who God is. It enables us to be able to express ourselves in prayer and grow in respect for the largeness of God and the infinite nature of His Love, Mercy, and Compassion. To revere something is to give it the due respect and homage that is due to it. When the object of our undying respect is Jesus Himself then there is no question that we should acquire a disposition of piety.

But to return to The Pieta... What is so remarkable is that in the silent statue, we understand some of the pain and suffering of Jesus. This is also true, if we truly look, we can see in the 'Stations of the Cross'. We are nearing the end of Lent, a time of special reflection, leading to the Passion of Jesus which leads us to the Resurrection. It is no mistake that after Rising Jesus is not as easily identifiable as He was before it. He has been transformed as we can be in prayer.

'Piety, real piety lives under the shadow of the Cross and on it. The overflowing of this life shows in a kind of awe, reverence and true devotion. The spirit falls in love with its Saviour and Redeemer and debases itself, prostrates itself, speaks tenderly, lovingly openly, gently, tearfully, slowly, unashamedly, moderately, passionately, to Jesus, or to the Most Holy Trinity. It cares not for the opinion of others or any outward manifestation or consequences of its reverent behaviour. The spirit is incapable of acting in any other way for it is filled with love and gratitude and thus it prays. Piety and Prayer are sisters.

The deeper the prayer the more the Spirit is transformed and it appears transformed and the signs externally are of complete absorption, listening, few word, sigh and tears. Piety is a great tenderness of heart'

(Taken from 'Rosebuds, Flowers of Surrender of the Crucified Jesus': Teachings on Virtue.)

So, as we conclude Lent and enter into The Risen life of Jesus let us reverence Him and be pious people in Love with God and serving our Brothers and Sisters in prayer.

Halina Holman

Pope Francis.

Piety is opening up one's heart to God and one's arms to embrace everyone as brothers and sisters.

The gift of piety that the Holy Spirit gives us makes us meek; it makes us peaceful, patient and at peace with God in gentle service to others. The gift of piety, is not closing your eyes, putting on a sweet angel face, to pretend to be a saint and holier than thou. But piety is recognizing our belonging to God, our deep bond with him, a relationship that gives meaning to our whole life and keeps us resolute, in communion with him, even during the most difficult and troubled moments in life. This personal bond with the Lord is not created out of obligation or force; it is 'a relationship lived from the heart', a friendship that changes our life and fills us with enthusiasm and joy, gratitude, praise and 'authentic worship of God'.

Rome 2014

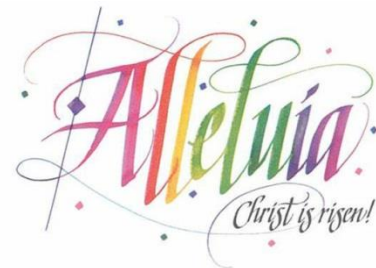
Let's go on a complete fast from news at least for a day

Let us make it silent within and keep all negativity at bay

Find back that spark inside, and feed it

A flame, a fire of passion for kindness, we truly need it.

Aufie Zophy.



Feast Days in April

2nd Palm Sunday

3rd Monday of Holy Week

4th Tuesday of Holy Week

5th Wednesday of Holy Week

6th Maundy Thursday

7th Good Friday (Fasting & Abstinence)

8th Holy Saturday, Easter Vigil

9th Easter Sunday

16th Second Sunday of Easter - Divine Mercy Sunday

18th St. Martin I

21st St. Anselm

23rd Third Sunday of Easter

24th St. George, Patron of England

25th St. Mark, Evangelist

28th Ss. Peter Chanel & St. Louis de Montfort

30th Fourth Sunday of Easter