



CITTA NUOVA

The great wind of the Resurrection

Fruits of suffering transformed by love

BY CHIARA LUBICH

GOOD FRIDAY: JESUS' DEATH ON THE cross is his sublime, divine, heroic lesson on the meaning of love.

He had given everything. He spent his life in obedience at Mary's side; he knew discomfort. He dedicated three years to preaching, revealing the truth, bearing witness to the Father, promising the Holy Spirit and working miracles of love of every kind. He suffered three hours on the cross, from which he forgave his executioners, opened Heaven to the Good Thief, gave us his mother, and finally, his body and blood, after having given them to us mystically in the Eucharist. He had given everything. Only his divinity remained.

His union with the Father—that most sublime and ineffable union

which had made him so powerful on earth as God's Son, and so majestic on the cross—that awareness of God's presence, had to withdraw into the deepest recesses of his soul and became imperceptible, separating him in a way from the very One of whom he had always said: "The Father and I are one" (Jn 10:30). Within him love had been snuffed out, light extinguished and wisdom silenced.

Jesus made himself nothing, to make us partakers in the All. He made himself a worm of the earth (see Psalm 22:7), to make us children of God.

We were separated from the Father. It was necessary that the Son, in whom we all are, should feel separated from the Father. He had to experience being forsaken by God,¹ so that we might never be forsaken again.

He had taught that no one has greater love than the one who gives his life for his friends. He who is Life itself was giving himself completely. It was the culmination of his love, love's most beautiful expression.

As a consequence, every painful aspect of life is one of his countenances, is indeed him.

Yes, because Jesus, crying out in his abandonment, is as one who is mute—he no longer knows how to express himself.

He is the image of one who is blind—he cannot see; of one who is deaf—he cannot hear.

He is the weary person, moaning. He is on the brink of despair. He is hungry ... for union with God. He is the image of one who has been deceived, betrayed; he seems a failure. He is fearful, timid, disoriented.

Jesus forsaken is darkness, melancholy and contrast. He is the image of all that is strange, undefinable, even monstrous, because he is God crying out for help!

He is the lonely person, the marginalized. He seems useless, an outcast, in shock....

It's up to us to recognize him in every suffering brother or sister. When we approach those who resemble

him, we can speak to them of Jesus forsaken. And when someone realizes that he or she is similar to him, and is willing to share his or her suffering with him, then he becomes words for the mute, the answer for the doubtful, light for the blind, voice for the deaf, rest for the weary, hope for the desperate, unity for the separated and peace for the restless. With him, one's life is transformed and the non-meaning of suffering acquires meaning. He had cried out a "why?" to which no one replied, so that we would have the answer to every question.

The problem of human life is suffering. Whatever form it may take, however terrible it may be, we know that Jesus has taken it upon himself and—as if by a divine alchemy—he transforms suffering into love.

I can say from my own experience that as soon as we lovingly accept any suffering in order to be like him, and then continue to love by doing God's will, if the suffering is spiritual, it disappears; if it is physical, the burden becomes light.

When our pure love connects with suffering, it transforms it into love. In a certain sense, it "divinizes" the suffering. We could almost say that the "divinization" of suffering that Jesus brought about continues in us.

And after each encounter in which we have loved Jesus forsaken, we find God in a new way, more face to face, with greater openness and fuller unity. Light and joy return, and, with joy, that peace which is a fruit of the Spirit.

This light, joy and peace, which blossom from suffering transformed by love, strike people and move even the most difficult persons. Nailed to the cross, we become mothers and fathers of souls. The effect is extreme fruitfulness.

"The great wind of the resurrection rushes in and fills the abyss that was opened for an instant by that cry," wrote Orthodox theologian Olivier Clément.

Every disunity is annulled, trauma and division healed, universal brotherhood shines forth, miracles of resurrection abound and a new springtime begins for the Church and for humanity.

1) Refers to Jesus on the cross when he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46).