THE ROCK OF CALVARY AND THE GRACE OF BAPTISM

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In Christ the Lord we gather on this holy night to contemplate the mystery of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. To contemplate the moment that changed history, the moment in which death was defeated, crushed. The Conqueror of death, of hell and of Satan comes forth from the tomb as a triumphant God, as the One who leads us to the gates that have been opened.

Good Friday, when Christ died on the cross, when, as Saint John the Apostle set down in his Gospel, a soldier opened His side with a lance. He opened it, my dear brethren; he did not pierce it, he did not wound it, but opened it. The Heart of Jesus is the gate to heaven. Good Friday, when Christ the Lord completed His propitiatory sacrifice, paid to God the debt of the ancient guilt, the gate of heaven is opened for us anew. Rightly did Saint John the Apostle use this verb to express this supernatural reality: the opening of the gates of heaven. And from this Heart blood came forth. It did not flow out, it did not gush out, but came forth, because through a gate one goes out and comes in. Through the open gate, the gate of the Heart of Jesus, God's grace came forth into this world. The blood and the water symbolise the sacraments of the Church. First of all the one that is the main theme of today's Holy Saturday liturgy: the sacrament of holy Baptism, Baptism, which washes the soul from original sin, Baptism, which pours God's grace into the soul.

Dear faithful, we celebrate this blessed night, the only night that was worthy to know the hour of the resurrection. This night in which Christ destroyed death. This night is closely bound to Good Friday. Good Friday cannot be separated from the morning of the resurrection. The cross of Christ, His Passion and suffering, cannot be separated from the glory and radiance of the resurrection.

Those of you who have had the opportunity to visit the Holy Land, to visit the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, may have had the chance to see two places, two special places, which express the mystery of tonight. Calvary and the Chapel of Adam, of that Adam, our first father. It turns out, my dear brethren, that the Chapel of Adam lies at the foot of Calvary, at the foot of Golgotha, exactly beneath the place of Christ's crucifixion. We all remember in the Gospel — the Evangelists point out that when Christ the Lord died, gave up the ghost, there was an earthquake. A mighty earthquake. An earthquake whose witness is preserved to this day. Here is the mountain, the rock of Calvary, on which Christ was crucified, into which the cross was driven, on which the Lamb of God died, who takes away the sins of the world. It split. This crack is plainly visible. A crack through the whole rock, several metres thick. This crack, this earthquake was no accident. When the rock of Calvary split, the blood that flowed from Christ's wounds, that ran down from the cross, flowed down, my dear brethren, into the tomb of Adam, washing his skull.

And so this place expresses in a special way the mystery of redemption. Our first father Adam, the one through whom death came into this world, according to God's justice [?] came to rest exactly in this place, in which several thousand years later redemption was to be accomplished. Precisely on Good Friday, when the rocks trembled, Calvary splits and through the fissure in the rock the blood of Christ Himself, the new Saviour, the One who brings life to the world, flows down from the cross onto the remains of Adam.

That is why the Holy Church cries out today in the *Exsultet* words that perhaps we do not understand, that are beyond our grasp. "This is the night in which Christ, having broken the chains of death, rose victorious from the depths. For nothing would it have profited us to be born, had we not profited from redemption. O wondrous grace of Thy mercy toward us! O inconceivable love in loving us: that Thou hast given up the Son to death to redeem a servant! O necessary sin of Adam, which was blotted out by the death of Christ! O happy fault, which deserved to have such and so great a Redeemer!"

HOLY BAPTISM

Dear faithful, today we bow over the mystery of redemption. We contemplate what was accomplished on the wood of the cross. And the Holy Church makes us aware of what the Passion of the Lord Jesus is meant to bring us to. What is redemption? Redemption, my dear brethren, means for us a new birth. Christ pays the debt, He washes us with His own blood, just as He washed the remains of Adam with His most precious blood. This washing is accomplished through the sacrament of holy Baptism and through holy confession, which the Fathers of the Church called a little baptism. The effect is similar: liberation, washing from sin.

Today we bow, my dear brethren, over this sacrament that opened the gate for us. It was the sacrament through which we were washed with the blood of the Lamb, who takes away the sins of the world. We express our deep gratitude to God's Providence that we have been set free from this sin, from the slavery of sin. We contemplate, my dear brethren, how great was God's love for man, who, as we heard in the *Exsultet*, in order to save a servant, a slave, gave up His own Son.

May this holy night of the resurrection, perhaps the last that we are permitted to live through here on earth, be joined with a firm resolution to keep, to preserve the grace that we received through holy Baptism. An inconceivable grace, this washing from guilt, this liberation from sin. When we realise what holy Baptism is, we shall realise what holy Baptism accomplishes in us.

As we contemplate this holy night, Christ descended into the depths to lead out of them the souls of the just of the Old Covenant. They had waited for many thousands of years. Let us realise what a grace it is for all of us that we have been baptised, that we are, my dear brethren, Catholics. An inconceivable grace. An inconceivable grace which, my beloved, we despise, which we do not appreciate, which we treat as something obvious. And the sacrament of holy Baptism is not something obvious, it is not something banal, it is not something common. In the sacrament of holy Baptism exactly what happened on Good Friday on Calvary takes place. The rock of sin that enslaves you, in which you were born, splits. That rock splits and the blood of Christ Himself flows down upon you. It washes.

If we only realised what grace has befallen us, then we would long to live by this grace of God, never to lose God's grace, sanctifying grace. For who among us can have a guarantee that he will still have the opportunity to regain this grace? We live, my dear brethren, in a difficult time. A still more difficult time lies before us. This Holy Saturday should be for all of us an occasion, a summons to a firm resolution to live by the grace of holy Baptism, to remain in sanctifying grace.

FIDELITY TO BAPTISMAL GRACE

This is not, my dear brethren, anything obvious. It is a great gift that we have received from the Most Holy Trinity. To live by sanctifying grace — something inconceivable, to have within oneself the life of God Himself, to become a participant in the life, the supernatural life, of the Most Holy Trinity. Let us make this resolution, my dear brethren, to remain in this grace of holy Baptism and to persevere in it until death. Whoever is still living in sin, let him break away as quickly as possible; whoever is still living in sin, let him wash himself as quickly as possible through the little baptism, the sacrament of holy confession, and remain ready, for we know neither the day nor the hour. This warning of the Lord Jesus becomes exceptionally timely and exceptionally frightening, awe-inspiring.

On this Holy Saturday of the year of the Lord 2026 I ardently beg you: consider what the grace of holy Baptism is. What this washing from sin is, which took place through holy Baptism. Consider the story of Adam. It is no accident that he came to rest, that his remains came to rest exactly in this place. It was God's plan to make us realise what is accomplished through holy Baptism, the first sacrament of the New and Eternal Covenant. This fissure in the rock, the rock of Golgotha, becomes a witness to the immensity of God's love, becomes a witness to the working of Providence. God stirs everyone through inspirations to conversion, to breaking with sin, to living by sanctifying grace.

[...] What is everyday, what is ordinary, we cease to

value. And so it has happened with our Catholic faith. So it has happened with the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Holy Mass, with the holy sacraments. Our grandfathers, our fathers did not value this great gift, this great grace which God gave us. And God punishes man in this way, that He takes away what man does not value. May we, my dear brethren, not experience God's chastisement as well. It was given to us to know, by the grace of God and God's love. Since it was given to us to know God's grace, the Catholic faith, a great obligation weighs upon us to live in this faith, to profess this faith. But this faith unfalsified, not slimmed down, not tuned up for the needs of modern man, the proud liberal. The faith that Christ entrusted to His apostles, the faith one of whose dogmas is *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*. Outside the Church there is no salvation. Whoever does not profess the Catholic faith, whoever is not washed in the blood of the Lamb, will not be able to enter the Kingdom.

Let us keep this before our eyes, my dear brethren, and let us make today this firm resolution that we will make every effort to live by sanctifying grace. If it happens that we sin, let us go as quickly as possible, as swiftly as possible, to the fountain of salvation, to the sacrament of confession.

O happy fault, which deserved to have such and so great a Redeemer. O happy man, who has come to know this Redeemer and Saviour. O happy man, who through this Saviour has been called into the Church, the ark of salvation, the Church outside of which there is no salvation.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.