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General audience: the Paschal Triduum is a story of love that knows no bounds

Vatican City, 23 March 2016 – The Paschal Triduum, the three days that speak to us of God's mercy and allow us to enter into the great mystery of the Resurrection of Christ, were the theme of Pope Francis' catechesis during this Wednesday's general audience in St. Peter's Square. Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday "speak to us of mercy, because they render visible how far God's love reaches".

The Gospel of St. John gives us the key for understanding its deepest meaning. "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end". "God's love is limitless", explained the Holy Father. "The mystery we adore in this Holy Week is a great story of love that knows no bounds. The Passion of Jesus lasts until the end of the world, because it is a story of sharing with the suffering of all humanity and a permanent presence in the events of the personal life of every one of us. In summary, the Paschal Triduum is the memorial of a drama of love that gives us the certainty that we will never be abandoned in the trials of life".

On Holy Thursday, with the institution of the Eucharist and the washing of the feet, Jesus teaches that "the Eucharist is love that makes itself service. It is the sublime presence of Christ that wishes to appease the hunger of every man, especially the weakest. … But in giving Himself to us as nourishment, Jesus demonstrates that we must learn to divide this sustenance with others, so that it may become a true communion of life with those who are in need. He gives Himself to us and asks us to abide with Him to do likewise".

Good Friday is the culmination of love. "A love that seeks to embrace all, excluding no-one. A love that extends to every time and every place; an inexhaustible source of salvation from which every one of us, sinners, may draw. If God has shown His supreme love in the death of Jesus, then we too, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, can and must love each other".

And finally, Holy Saturday, the day of God's silence. "Jesus, laid in the tomb, shares with all humanity the drama of death. It is a silence that speaks and expresses love as solidarity with those abandoned for ever, to those whom the Son of God reaches by filling the emptiness that only the infinite mercy of the Father can fill. … On this day, love becomes the wait for life in the resurrection. It is the love that does not doubt, but that hopes in the word of the Lord, so as to become manifest and resplendent on Easter Day".

It is a great mystery of love and mercy that we can be helped to understand by the words of the mystic Julian of Norwich, who described her visions of the Passion of Jesus: "So our good Lord asked me: 'Are you happy I suffered for you?'. I said, 'Yes, good Lord, and I thank you; yes, good Lord, may You be blessed'. So Jesus, our good Lord, said: 'If you are happy, I am too. Having suffered the Passion for you is for me a joy, a happiness, and eternal joy; and if I could suffer more I would". "This is our Jesus", exclaimed Pope Francis, "Who to each one of us says: 'If I could suffer more I would".

"Let us be enveloped by this mercy that comes towards us; and in these days, as we keep our gaze fixed on the Passion and death of the Lord, let us welcome in our heart the greatness of His love, awaiting the Resurrection", the Pope concluded.

At the end of his catechesis, in his greetings in various languages, the Holy Father mentioned the young German-speaking pilgrims of Regnum Christi, the group of Daughters of Mary Help of Christians from Portugal, Brazil, Angola and Mozambique, accompanied by their teachers, participants in the UNIV Congress for university students promoted by the Prelature of Opus Dei, the members of the Toronto Italian school and cultural centre, participants in the "Montefortiana" march of Verona and the Association of Italian Jurists. "May the visit to the Eternal City on the occasion of the Jubilee of Mercy enable us all to rediscover the joy of giving through the works of mercy, which fill the heart more than receiving".