**April 9, 1933**

I greet you, esteemed countrymen and countrywomen, with the words: Praised be Jesus Christ!

 We stand at the threshold of the Holy Week. The week is truly holy as it is the week of the memory of the road to Calvary, the bitter Passion, and the death of Our Lord Christ. Let us go back one-thousand-nine-hundred and thirty-three years ago. Let us stand before the sacred city. Painful and sorrowful while horrible images appear before our eyes. Do not veil your eyes. Look straight and boldly. The city dwellers are sleeping. There is an ominous and dreadful silence. The light of the moon is covered by dark and heavy clouds. Midnight is approaching. Near the city, there is the Mount of Olives. There kneels Our Lord Christ. He prays and sighs. Bloody sweat has liberally covered his forehead and his pale face. Terrified, Christ is praying. Listen: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will."[[1]](#footnote-1) and "My Father, if it is not possible that this cup pass without my drinking it, your will be done!"[[2]](#footnote-2) At that time a group of thugs appeared with Judas at the head. Betrayal. He moves toward the divine teacher…a traitorous student. He greets him with a normal kiss, saying, “Hail, Rabbi!” The group of troublemakers jumps on the defenseless Christ, restraining his hands with rough rope. The painful and disgraceful march to Annas’ court. An arrogant court servant hits Christ in the cheek with an iron glove. The court at Caiaphas’. The persecutors spit in the Savior’s face and punch him with fists. They throw a dirty rag on his face, kick him, and beat him while cruelly mocking him, "Prophesy! Who is it that struck you?"[[3]](#footnote-3) The King of the Jews, dressed in a white sheet, moves before Pilate and Herod! Look at his face, quiet and calm even though it is pitilessly beaten and swollen.

It is not enough, however. They tie the Son of God to a marble pole and mercilessly whip his flesh down to the bone of his shoulder, as if he were a slave. They forcefully press down a crown of thorns. They throw a scarlet robe on his shoulders. They press a thick and hard rod into his hands as a kingly scepter. Drunken soldiers, bowing and sweating, cry out impudently, “Hail, King of the Jews!”[[4]](#footnote-4) Pilate asks the crowds to pick between the Son of God, Christ, and the criminal Barabbas and they answer, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us."[[5]](#footnote-5) Finally, the mournful march up Calvary begins. The fainting Christ with a heavy cross on his shoulders: the Cyrenian, Veronica, the saintly weeping women… And so we are at the top of the mountain. The place of the skull. We hear the deaf echoes of the hammers…thin and long nails penetrate Christ’s hands and feet. The cross is lifted. The body is drawn out, stretched, the shoulders separated from the joints. The chest is crushed. Blood pours down by streams and sprinkles the earth. A shiver shakes the dying body. This still does not please the enraged crowds. Impudent blasphemies pour out of the mouth of the ungrateful. Something strange: it seems that one hears a voice full of pain and grief, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"[[6]](#footnote-6) Soon after that death pulls a thick veil over the last act of tragedy on the mount of Calvary! Similar scenes to the one from almost two thousand years ago play out today in the world arena. Today we have the ways of the cross, which are taken up by many sacrificial people. Today we have Calvary on which good and just people die. Here is the title:

**The Twentieth Century Calvary**

 I sit by the desk and describe the suffering and pain: sadness and tears of today’s innocent casualties. Who is able to count them? Betrayals, contempt, mockery, false judgments, bribed witnesses, the crown of suffering, scourging with slander, unfair sentences, liberty for the guilty, the innocent suffering: scarcity, poverty, misery, uncertainty, fear, apprehension, turmoil, unhappiness, disbelief…these all nail crosses, and gather on the shoulders of people, who under their crosses stagger, stumble, fall, and finally die on the cross. They die amidst scornful shouting, learned and wise Pharisees and elders: having a dead conscience, a stone heart, real statues seeming bright and exemplary on the outside but inside being filled with filthy and disgusting worms. The casualties of today’s way of the cross? Little children appear move before my eyes. How poorly are they dressed! They shiver from the cold. They sit curled up and cry. Bread…they lack a piece of bread. Let it by dry, black, and aged. There is nothing else! With a shy glance, in which hides a begging request, they look at the worn-out and pale face of their mother. In vain. They don’t dare turn to their father, who sits with a clouded forehead, clenched mouth, with despair in the mind, with rage in the heart. This is the way of the cross…this is the Calvary of our days!

 I see large crowds of orphans, without fathers or mothers. They are crying. Other children are happy. They have esteemed fathers and loving mothers. And we? We don’t have anyone to talk to: to vent our feelings to. We are thrown to the graces of fortune, helpless and abandoned. Where are we to find advice? Who will help us? What will happen to us? God, God, why did you take our parents? We did you leave us alone? This is the way of the cross, the Calvary of today.

 More and more complaints come from the children, innocent victims of the viciousness and perversity of humans. We once had a house: we once had a mother and father. Dad took care of us and Mom loved us. One day our parents got angry and had an argument. The police came. They put Dad into jail and Mom ran away. The court gave us to people who take care of us. We exist but we do not live. From day to day…with no heart and no love. What tomorrow brings, we do not know. If these people throw us out as well, where will we go? What will happen to us? What will be our future? Bitterness and uncertainty! Tears and complaints. This is the way of the cross… this is the Calvary of today’s times.

 Listen patiently and cry sorrowfully, “Our dad was once hard-working, sober, devout, and good. A few years ago, he changed completely. He is rarely at home. At dawn he leaves the house. He comes back in the evening, sometimes alone, but often with his friends. Drinking and cursing ensues to the early hours of the morning. We are afraid of our father because he beats us and chases our mother out of the house. We have few ships and toys because our dad has smashed and broken all of them. It’s true that we get a little help from the city, but our dad takes half and drinks it away. Not only does he not go to church, he does not even say his daily prayers. He curses us and our mother when we go to Mass on Sunday. He has thrown out the crucifixes and holy images from our house. He blasphemes and claims not to fear God. We are afraid that when something happens to us, our drunken father will change into a crazy and vicious man. Can we honor and love our drunken and godless father? What is God punishing us and our mother for? We want to love our father and we will love him if he improves and abandons drinking and will be a father to us like before.” This is the painful sorrow of the martyrs of today’s way of the cross and sacrifices of the new Calvary!

 If there is a group that slowly and heavily stumbles under the heavy cross over this painful road, then it is our wives and mothers. How many of them have been abused and beaten, not just morally, but, unfortunately, physically, from day to day, from month to month, carrying the heavy cross over their vocation and condition. With angelic patience, with iron endurance, with a deep trust that, finally, an end will come. They are continually pushing forward on the way of the cross, without complaining, although with deeply wounded hearts, with a painful countenance, although gentle and calm, they move in front of our eyes…the wives of drunkards and gamblers, the wives of unbelievers and the vicious, the wives of the impudent and demanding, the wives of the unfaithful and angry, the wives of the unjust and suspicious, the wives of the jealous and judgmental, the wives of cheaters, thugs, bandits, thieves, murderers…and so on. Listen! How many humble and fervent prayers are carried up every second to the heavenly gates for the correction and conversion of others? How many tears fall out of sight from other people: bitter, heavy, and bloody tears? The tears of deceived, disappointed, pitilessly abandoned, neglected, tossed off and forgotten wives. The crowds march by the road of painful uncertainty, turmoil, and disappointment. How many stand on Calvary and die on the cross of betrayal, discouragement, abandonment, and forgetfulness.

 Mothers, looking at the way of the cross of their children, change into sorrowful mothers. The heart of a mother beats only for her child. A mother lives only for her children. Is it any surprise that she cries and suffers whenever her child cries and suffers. If she could, she would willingly carry her and her children’s crosses on her old and hunched shoulders. She forgets about herself. She forgets the impudence of her son and the viciousness of her daughter because they are her children. She sees them, just as years ago the tiny mouths said, “mommy, mommy” and remembers how the weak hands grasped her neck: how the golden-haired head rested on her chest with such trust. She remembers the first steps of her children…the first whispered prayers. In her eyes all the vices and falls disappear: stubbornness, disobedience, forgetfulness, ingratitude…because they are her children. That poor mother who expected so much after her child, promised herself so much, and today opens her tear-filled eyes and sees her child swaying under the weight of the cross… and so she suffers. Don’t be surprised that she begs and reaches out her hands to heaven and fervently sends her prayers. She is worried, cries, hurts, despairs, and seeks some rescue for her child. With that her own cross grows larger…the way of the cross grows longer.

 Let us remind ourselves, at this moment, how many poor and abandoned mothers hang on the mount of Calvary, nailed to the cross of abandonment and forgetfulness? Poor old women! They sacrificed their lives for their children; they raised their children and gave them an education. And today? The children have signed them out of the last corner of their house. They took their own mother and threw her out onto someone else’s graces: like old, broken, and useless equipment. For these old mothers, whole summers spent in nursing homes are one continuous Holy Week in the shadow of Calvary!

 How many esteemed, sober, and exemplary husbands go on the way of the cross? The reasons are many-fold. Frivolous wives seeking new thrills. Wives unceasingly seeking theatre and dance recreation, or in front of green card tables with inappropriate company. Spendthrift wives, with no regard to earnings or expenses: wives who have long forgotten their duties, wives who disregard their wedding vows: wives who have abandoned the yoke of marital intercourse: wives who have allowed themselves to be caught up in the fads of our time and imagine that they deserve worriless freedom and unlimited comfort, without the slightest self-denial or without sacrifice. Such wives and those that are like them cause misunderstandings, separation, divorce: breaking up families and ruining houses. They cast crosses of turmoil and despair on their husbands who often go to Calvary in a sudden, violent, and horrible death.

One more group today carries a large and heavy cross. These are the unemployed. Personally, I don’t seek any excuse to turn so often to the misery and suffering of these forgotten but worthy soldiers- workers! I do this from duty and duty only! Almost two thousand years ago the famous son of a working carpenter was led, heaving and grunting under the weight of the cross! It was the Holy Week! Your Holy Week has not lasted for seven days but has been going for the past three years. Great, sad, and painful three years. You drag the cross of uncertainty, doubt, and suffering. The pitiless tormenters have betrayed you, falsely accused you, covered your eyes, scourged and crowned you. They, whom you trusted, betrayed you, blinded you with the extravagant promises, beat you with the bat of scarcity, and hosted on your head the crown of poverty and misery! Today you drag that cross, under the weight of which you have fallen, just as thousands have fallen and disappeared.

Your way of the cross is coming to an end, thanks be to God. But understand this, that no human mind or reason- no human invention- no purely human teaching will teach you how to live, what to do with yourselves to have peace and achieve happiness! Only one person can do that, non other than the Son of God, who once went with the cross on his shoulder and whom the arrogance and hatred of humans nailed to the cross! It is true that he came to save everyone and make them happy. He taught and did, that means he turned teaching into action. However, in his heart there was a special corner for sinners, the poor, the abandoned, orphans, and widows. He stood in defense of the so called crowds. He fed them and gave them drink. He was merciful to the crowds. He bravely and publicly condemned those who considered themselves better but scorned those poorer than them. Remember the story of the rich man and Lazarus:

"There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores. When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he cried out, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames.' Abraham replied, 'My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented. Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours.' He said, 'Then I beg you, father, send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of torment.' But Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.' He said, 'Oh no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' Then Abraham said, 'If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead.'"[[7]](#footnote-7)

 Does this parable not bring a comfort, amidst the unemployment and whole process of misfortune which you follow, for all of you and especially for those who are today unemployed? I repeat that for you it seems that this Holy Week, which has been lasting for three years, will end! I also say, and I put special emphasis on this, that in this week may every unemployed worker set his matter straight with Him, who two thousand years ago, weighed down by the cross, walked along the streets of the holy city, and on Good Friday, amidst the darkness, hung on the cross and resurrected on Holy Saturday.

 After the way of the cross, after Calvary, Resurrection.

1. Matthew 26:24-25. New American Bible. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Matthew 26:27. New American Bible. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Luke 22:16. New American Bible. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Matthew 27: 17. New American Bible. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Luke 23: 3. New American Bible. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Matthew 27: 28. New American Bible. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Luke 16: 12-15. New American Bible. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)