



## Teachings from Reverend Antoinette Schoenmaker In Sorrow and Joy

*Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man -- though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.*  
*Romans 5:1-10*

TODAY IS A BELOVED AND UNIQUE DAY in our spiritual year: Rose Sunday – when we recognize that something is growing within us that is of Christ, when we focus on seeing something of his beauty in ourselves and in each other, and acknowledge that we are growing steadily more able to manifest and express his power and his grace.

### **What is Lovely**

Personally I am thankful that there is such a day as today. When we focus on what is right, what is good, what is lovely, what has excellence; rather than on what is not good, or needs correcting. I think it is manifestly wise that we have such a day during our Lenten journey to Golgotha. I think we need the strength of this day, the encouragement of this day, to continue to follow where Christ is leading. St Paul in his letter to the Philippians, tells us that this is the way to keep our hearts and minds in Christ. He says:

*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*  
*Philippians 4:4-8*

This to me embodies the essence of the work of this day.

## The Realisation

For me there is also a very great connection between this day and the spiritual focus of our year which is Realisation. The opened rose is surely a great symbol of something realized, fully visible, fully expressed.

We call Christ the Rose of Sharon because he stands for all time in history as the great revealer of what the human being can become when we fully realize the spirit given to us. As such he is the rose that blooms in the desert, but we hope that one day this desert will become a magnificent paradise.

## The Text

The text given to us today by Rev Mario is a very beautiful one. It takes place in the intimate setting of the upper room. It is night. It is dark. Jesus has just washed the feet of his disciples and now he is at table, the table of the last supper. Seated at the table with the Christ is John, the beloved, on one side, and Judas, the betrayer, on the other. Across the way a bit is Peter, the spokesman for the other disciples. Mario says to us in today's meditation: *Let us sit with the Christ, listen to his words and drink in the power of his nature and love.*

*When Jesus had thus spoken, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was lying close to the breast of Jesus; so Simon Peter beckoned to him and said, "Tell us who it is of whom he speaks." So lying thus, close to the breast of Jesus, he said to him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give this morsel when I have dipped it." So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly." Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the money box, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the feast"; or, that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the morsel, he immediately went out; and it was night.*

*When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and in him God is glorified; if God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me; and*

*as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.' A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

*John 13:21-35*

It has always struck me as a paradox, or ironic at least, that we are often given this story of betrayal to contemplate on Rose Sunday. Every year I make something different of it. This year I realize that it alerts us to what stops us from displaying and disclosing the beauty of Christ within us. When we deny or hide that strength and power, it is surely a betrayal and negation of that great gift of God to the human being. So, this meditation directs us to contemplate what stops us from fully realizing the Christ.

## The Opportunity to Glorify the Son of Man

What is beautiful is that it is clear in this passage that Jesus is not stopped. On the contrary. He says, after Judas has gone, *Now is the Son of Man glorified and in him, God is glorified.* Glory, glorification, has many meanings to us, but surely one is beauty and shining forth, visibility. At this moment of betrayal and dismay there is the real opportunity to shine forth the beauty of Christ's spirit. Here is where it can be seen and known.

I imagine that if we were in Jesus' shoes and came to know that we were about to be betrayed that we might have a completely different response. We may well become argumentative, defensive, angry. We might very well get on our high horse. Or we may become morose, dispirited, feel it was all in vain and lose our hope. Either way we are pulled away from our centre, ourselves, from our purpose and being. We close our hearts. Or leave them. But for Calvary to be real, we must be in the centre of our being with open hearts, as Christ was.

## What is Lost?

What is lost when we leave the centre of our being at such a moment? Mostly we never know. But in the Gospel of St John we have a

very clear picture. If Christ had left then, we would have had none of the beautiful teaching that followed this moment: the teaching of John 14 about the Father's house having many rooms, of Christ going before us opening the way and preparing the rooms, of the Comforter who would bring all things to remembrance.

We would not have the teaching of John 15 about the true vine and the source of our fruitfulness, of no longer being servants but friends, and the command to love one another as Christ loves us. Or John 16, with its warning about persecution, and at the same time the knowledge that the Spirit of Truth will lead and guide us in the truth, and the assurance that we can ask anything of the Father and he will give it to us.

Or John 17, and the privilege of hearing our great high priest's intimate conversation with the Father, and his prayer for us, that we may be one as he is one with the Father.

Something so intimate and beautiful is both given and accomplished in these chapters. Those of us who studied this Gospel in OMC know this and have felt this. A new relationship is created at this point between Christ and his disciples, and all who read these words. And as a consequence something new and delightful is established between our inner I AM and all the powers of our soul. They are drawn closer. They are more united and at ease.

Imagine if none of this had been given or done. Imagine if Jesus had clammed up at the point where Judas went out. How differently the scene before Pilate may have been played out. How differently would that condemnation have been. How differently the post-resurrection would have been experienced. Perhaps the Risen Christ would not have been seen. Perhaps the spirit would not have been given. But fortunately Jesus continues to be and to give of the fragrance of his being.

### **Disappointment**

So far we have focussed on the Christ, on the spirit we want to realize and express, but let

us look for a minute at Judas also. He depicts at this point what stops us from being centred in who we really are, what closes our heart and prevents Calvary from being real.

Judas is motivated by disappointment. He is disappointed in Christ. Christ is not going to fulfil what Judas thinks he needs and wants. Suddenly he realizes that what he thought Jesus was, he wasn't. He is disillusioned. He is not going to rescue Israel, he is going to sacrifice himself. Jesus no longer conforms to Judas's image of the Messiah. So he wants to teach Jesus something. He doesn't want him dead, he doesn't want the money, he just wants to teach him a lesson. He wants Christ to see it his way and do it his way.

Disillusionment, dissatisfaction, disappointment – we deal with these forces and these feelings very often in our lives. They seem innocent but are very dangerous forces. The Gospels tell us that at this point Satan entered into Judas. Mario describes disappointment and disillusion as a great and terrible power which will grasp you in an iron grip and not let you go.

I thought disappointment was an interesting area to explore so I did a bit of a search to see what Mario had said about it. It turns out he has said quite a lot over the years as of course he experienced a great deal of disappointment himself. However, it was also clear that he didn't remain in his disappointment.

One of the ways, he said, we could tell if we were really sincere in our wanting to follow Christ, know God's will and be a channel of his love and mercy, was whether we are willing to change and forgive and forget hurts and disappointments. (*The Art of Meditation Lectures*) Clearly Judas couldn't get over his hurt at this point.

He also said that it is when you are too much identified with your physical or worldly identity and thinking that you will have deep and great disappointments. (Meritus Meditation April 2<sup>nd</sup> 1995) His advice was not to seek satisfaction in worldly affairs or worldly efforts, for that is where deep disappointment

and calamity will arise. (1991 Centre Reading)

He also made it clear that if our thinking is based on our emotions and feelings, then we are also opening ourselves to disappointment and the devils that come with it. (Easter 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1984)

Mario describes the role of Judas at this point in Christ's life in one of his lectures on numerology. This is what he says and he is talking about the Number 6:

*This is the Challenge of Distorted Idealism, beware of it. 6 is full of ideals and principles, knows the Law (as he sees it) and wants everyone to accept it – according to his interpretation. In the challenge position, 6 is exacting and domineering, eternally striving to jack everyone up to his standards and meeting with one disappointment after another because no one ever quite comes up to specifications. He is over-positive about right and wrong and never tolerates any deviation from the rules he has set down. He never makes any mistakes, but everybody else makes many. All the love, harmony and adaptability of 6, becomes lost in the fog of self-opinion and self-righteousness. He is smug.*

The remedy, Mario gives is this: *Realise that life is an individual problem and don't attempt to make rules for anybody except yourself. If you aren't in a position to make laws, don't worry about every newspaper report of prevailing conditions, and harp on your favorite note, "There ought to be a law". You will never find the love and companionship so necessary to your happiness until you learn to respect another's point of view and cease trying to re-make it to fit your own.*

In working out whether Judas is a factor for us, Mario gave us these questions to ask of ourselves: *In my passion of making adjustments, am I able to adjust myself to conditions in my own environment? Do I allow my partner and friends to have their own standards and opinions? Do I have the idea that I could run the home, the office, the country or the universe better than it is being run at the present?*

We all have these thoughts from time to time, but these are the factors that make for disillusionment and disappointment and which can so easily take us away from our own purpose and being. But if we are sincere in our discipleship of Christ, and are humble and willing to be taught and learn, then we can turn our disappointments into something else.

Mario asks: *What is the disappointment of your life at present? What is the sadness that occupies you for awhile and then dissipates (because sadness is never real)? What is it that holds you back from flying into the freedom of your being? This is a question you have to answer yourself. But let me tell you that one great factor which prevents you from being free from pain, disappointment and sadness is your ego. Your ego has been hurt, no more. If you can transcend your ego for a moment then you will be free of that disappointment. Pain can come, sadness can come, tears may come, but if you can transcend it then you stand, as St Paul says, in the glorious liberty of the Sons of God.* (22<sup>nd</sup> September 1985)

*The task of our Centre is to bring within you a renewal whereby you can stand as one who can slay the Evil One. Of course you will be wounded and hurt; even by those who also follow Christ; for there is much blindness even among God's people.*

*Don't close your heart; never hold back. In disappointment and in pain, in the dissatisfaction of your astral self, do not hold back the love that lies within you and in that love, go forward. Never lose the picture of divine love (the rose), for with that your life has meaning to the souls whom you must touch and heal. Keep your eyes open; your heart wide open; and let your soul be transformed by the strength of him who has called you, who gave you the fullness that is yours right now.*

(Fourteen Stations March 1986 Oracle)

### **The Beauty of Christ**

Christ is such a contrast to Judas at this point. The beauty and strength of Christ is

that he does not demand or need anything, but in his own beingness continues to give while letting others be. That is the beauty and the power we recognize in Christ, and in the Father. They are great because they don't require us to be like them in order to accept us and love us. We are all accepted, as we are, in our uniqueness. There is no movement here to make the other person conform to their values and view of life.

We do not see reproach in the nature of Christ. We do not see reproof. We see the certainty of his relationship with the Father. We see his assuredness that he is a spiritual being with a spiritual purpose that is being accomplished in that very moment. We see him understanding that all things are unfolding as they should. We see him reassuring his disciples. We see him letting his betrayer be.

Today we are called upon to recognize that this power of Christ is growing within us. And that our real identity is not dependent on anyone else. We are called upon to recognize our relationship with the Father and with the purpose given to each of us when we came into this world. We are called upon to realize those moments when we can say, "Now, right now, the son of man is glorified." We are called upon to stay centred in what is real and has value for eternity.

This is the rose of Christ, the beauty of Christ. We learn from this passage that it exists in all circumstances – in moments of betrayal and disappointment, in moment of glory, in moments of healing and teaching, in moments of fellowship, in moments of sorrow. It exists. It lives because it is not subject to the judgements of this culture or this time. So very soon after this moment, the disciples and even Judas realized, what Christ was doing.

### **The Light of His Countenance**

Faith in Christ and what he is doing, faith in God and his purposes, is what is required. In one of the meditations this week Mario said the more we can live and act in this faith, the more our soul is illumined.

What is this light that illumines the soul and beautifies it? This light is the love of the Father who sees us already perfect in Christ. For him the paradise garden is already a reality. Yet this is the light we find blinding. It is so hard to walk in this light of perfection. And yet we pray for the light of his countenance to shine upon us, for we need this light for the inner rose to grow.

This is the true light that exists in all earthly weather conditions. Whether it appears stormy and dark, or pleasant and fair, the true light of God's vision of us is always there. It exists in time, but it lives in eternity. Let us now take a look at ourselves in this light and let all the distraction of our disappointments be washed away.

So shall it be.

*An address for the Rose Sunday Cosmic Mass, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2005*



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**Collect Prayer:**

Grant, O God of our hearts,  
the quietness and peace that our souls  
desire,  
the inner point of contact  
whereby we are able to stand fast  
and glimpse a vision of your glory  
and that which you have prepared for us.  
Let us not be dismayed  
nor shaken in the hope that lies before us.  
Grant us the inner knowingness, that inner  
security,  
that we are hidden in you and you in us.  
Still within us our disappointments and all that  
pains us  
and open us like a lotus flower towards the  
sun  
that we may drink in the fullness of your  
revelation.  
Make us deeply aware of your working in and  
through us,  
and let love be the guiding point through  
which we shall know  
that nothing can separate us from that which  
is bound together in love.  
In our search for you and for more knowledge  
grant us the impetus, the determination,  
to follow you wherever you have put us.  
Make us also aware that we are surrounded  
by a host of heavenly witnesses,  
that we are not alone in our struggle  
nor in our disappointments or sorrow,  
but that we are united with all that is lovely,  
with all that is gloriful,  
with all that lifts us into heavenly regions.  
Make us therefore to stand firm and take our  
place with Christ.  
This we pray in his name:  
So shall it be.

(The Opening and Closing Prayers from  
1978-07-26-SFG 'The Expression Of God  
Through Us' 2<sup>nd</sup> Series on the Letter of John)

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