

March 24, 2024
Palm/Passion Sunday
by Rev. Frances Savill

Excerpts from a prayer by Henri Nouwen Heart to Heart p. 35-44

Dear Lord Jesus, You, "the image of the unseen God, the first-born of all creation, for whom all things are created in heaven and on earth, everything visible and everything invisible," you hang dead on a cross. I look at you. You have just spoken your last words, "It is fulfilled," and given up your spirit.

You have given everything. You "have emptied yourself, taking the form of a slave; you have humbled yourself by accepting death, death on a cross." Your body has been fully given for me; your blood has been fully poured out for me. You who are love have not held back anything for yourself but have let all your love flow from your heart to make it bear fruit in me.

I look at your dead body on the cross. The soldiers, who have broken the legs of the two men crucified with you, do not break your legs, but one of them pierces your side with a lance, and immediately blood and water flow out.

Your heart is broken, the heart that did not know hatred, revenge, resentment, jealousy, or envy but only love, love so deep and so wide that it embraces your Father in heaven as well as all humanity in time and space.

Your broken heart is the source of my salvation, the foundation of my hope, the cause of my love. It is the sacred place where all that was, is and ever shall be is held in unity.

There all suffering has been suffered, all anguish lived, all loneliness endured, all abandonment felt, and all agony cried out. There, human and divine love have kissed, and there, God and all men and women of history are reconciled. All the tears of the human race have been cried there, all pain understood, and despair touched.

Together with all people of all times, I look up to you whom they have pierced, and I gradually come to know what it means to be part of your body and your blood, what it means to be human.

O Jesus, you were sent to us not to condemn us, but to reveal to us your love and your Father's love.

How much your heart wanted to give that love to me and to all people. Your desire was that we would accept that love and let it transform us into children of your Father - your sisters and brothers.

But here you are, nailed to a cross. Your heart is broken. The love you came to give was not received; the love you came to receive was not given.

Your heart, that human heart overflowing with divine love is broken. Rejected, despised, spat upon, laughed at, beaten and crowned with thorns, you hang on your cross.

I look at you, Lord, and I see your pierced side, the place where your heart is broken. And as I look, my eyes begin to recognize the anguish and agony of all the people for whom you gave yourself.

Your broken heart becomes the heart of all humanity, heart of all the world. What an anguish! What an agony! You carry them all.

O compassionate Lord, your heart is broken. All the people of the past, the present and those yet to be born can look up at you and see their anguish and their agony on your cross.

Thank you, Jesus, for the mystery of your broken heart, a heart broken by us and for us, that has become now the source of forgiveness and new life.

The blood and water flowing from your side show me the new life that is given to me through your death. It is a life of intimate communion with you and your Father. But it is also a life that calls me to give all that I am in the service of your love for the world.

It is a life of joy, but also of sacrifice. It is a glorious life, but also one that does not run from suffering. It is a life of peace, but also struggle for your purposes.

O, Lord Jesus, I thank you. I praise you. I love you. Let the blood and water that flow from your heart give me a new heart to live a new life. Amen.