

Betrayed by a friend; abandoned by family and friends; unjustly arrested and imprisoned; falsely charged and convicted; mocked and beaten; crowned with thorns; dragged through the streets carrying a tree on his back to be punched and spat upon; stripped naked and tortured with nails driven through flesh and muscle and bone; finally, hung up to die stripped of all human dignity, with stone and brick and garbage thrown at him.

Dear God, why? Why this just man, this good man, this healing man, this compassionate man, this God-man? Why, dear God, why?

In the words of Pope Francis, we have an answer: “Because Jesus takes upon himself the evil, the filth, the sin of the world, including the sin of all of us, and he cleanses it; he cleanses it with his blood, with the mercy and the love of God.”

“Let us look around,” our Holy Father continues, “how many wounds are inflicted upon humanity by evil! Wars, violence, economic conflicts that hit the weakest; greed for money that you can’t take with you and have to leave. When we were small, our grandmother used to say, “A shroud has no pocket,” Love of power, corruption, divisions, crimes against human life and against creation! And as each one of knows and is aware—our personal sins: our failures in love and respect toward God, toward our neighbor, and toward the whole of creation. Jesus on the cross feels the whole weight of the evil, and with the force of God’s love he conquers it; he defeats it with his resurrection. This is the good that Jesus does for us on the throne of the cross. Christ’s cross embraced with love never leads to sadness but to joy; to the joy of having been saved and of doing a little of what he did on the day of his death.”

“Dear Brothers and Sisters, our Supreme Pontiff pleads with us, “let us be enveloped by the mercy of God; let us trust in his patience, which always gives us more time. Let us find the courage to return to his house, to dwell in his loving wounds, allowing ourselves to be loved by him and to encounter his mercy in the sacraments. We will feel his wonderful tenderness, we will feel his embrace, and we, too, will become more capable of mercy, patience, forgiveness, and love.”

Thus, our Holy Father, Pope Francis I, answers our “Why?” to the Cross.